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DICKENS'S
POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF
THE PICKWICK CLUB

ABRIDGED WITH INTRODUCTION

BY RUSSELL SCOTT

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TORONTO AND MELBOURNE

P R E F A C E

Pickwick is considerably too long for a School Reader, and to adapt it for that purpose it is necessary to omit. Fortunately the structure of the book admits of a condensation which seems to need no apology. The present edition is lightened by the omission of all the incidental stories (which most Pickwickians, we suspect, are often tempted to skip) and of certain episodes, such as the Rochester Duel and the Bath Footmen's Swarry, which it is possible to remove without injury to their context. Stiggins is the only prominent character who disappears entirely.¹ The Introduction deals with some points in the life and manners of the period which are unfamiliar to the rising generation, and the Glossary explains the hard words and allusions. It has not seemed necessary to add any notes.

My thanks are due to Mr. T. J. Grubb, who has supplied me from original sources with some useful material for the Introduction, especially in the part on old-time elections.

R. S.

¹ The main omissions are indicated in the text by the retention of the original chapter numbers. The following page numbers taken from *The Oxford Edition* give the complete list of omitted passages—45-78, 113-20, 127-35, 189-98, 288-96, 317-24, 342-63, 439-48, 473-85, 500-32, 544-51, 611-22, 732-44, 790-811, 847-61, 894-908.

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INTRODUCTION

THE *Pickwick Papers* were published in 1836. They came out in serial form and were intended by the publishers to serve primarily as a link connecting together a number of drawings of sporting scenes by R. Seymour. On the death of that artist before the second number of *Pickwick* had appeared, his place was taken by H. K. Browne, who, under the name of "Phiz", illustrated many of Dickens's subsequent works. The charge of exaggeration and caricature has been made against Dickens's portraiture; and if we are apt to accept the charge as well founded, it is probably, in part, because our impressions have been coloured by the grotesque, though clever, delineations of "Phiz".

As Dickens proceeded with the serial he found the Club and its Posthumous Papers a useless encumbrance. Accordingly they were dropped out until the end of the book, where the Club was introduced again only to have its dissolution announced. The characters, too, of certain actors in the story underwent modification as they took more definite shape in the author's mind. Dickens himself in his preface to the reprint made allusion to this: "It has been remarked of Mr. Pickwick," he says, "that there is a decided change in his character, as these pages proceed, and that he becomes more good and more sensible. I do not think this change will appear forced or unnatural to my readers, if they will reflect that in real life the peculiarities and oddities of a man who has anything whimsical about him, generally impress us first, and that it is not until we are better acquainted with him that we usually begin to look below these superficial traits, and to know the better part of him."

It was the degree of fame that Dickens had gained as the author of *Sketches by Boz* which brought him the commission to write *Pickwick*. He was only twenty-four, his reputation was comparatively modest, and the early numbers of *Pickwick* only secured a circulation of four hundred. This soon increased, especially after the appearance of Sam Weller upon the scene, and a wit of the time sought to prove the superiority of his favourite author by declaring that others wrote well but Dickens wrote "weller". When the story closed, its circulation had increased over a hundred-fold, and Dickens had taken his place among authors of the first rank.

Pickwick has remained the most generally popular of all his works. Even thirty years after its publication it evoked from Calverley an examination paper, consisting of a set of humorous questions which appear, together with a key, at the end of *Fly-leaves*. Its reception by his contemporaries may be illustrated by the anecdote of an invalid who was told by his doctor that he had only one more week to live. "No matter," replied the patient, "the last number of *Pickwick* will be out before that." Such enthusiasm is almost incredible to modern readers, especially young ones; for if *Pickwick* has become a classic it has acquired something of classic mustiness; it cannot throb with modern realism as it did to its first readers.

The generous human sympathy of Mr. Pickwick belongs to all times, as do also the essential qualities of nearly all the persons in the story, but in most externals how remote they are from us, those quaint old-fashioned people with their ceremonious modes of speech, or their Cockney slang unlike anything to be heard in London to-day, and with their constrained gallantries towards hysterical ladies who scream and faint with curious facility. What a strange life they lead, with their cumbrous modes of travel, their elaborate toilettes in coats of bright colour by day, in shirts and caps by night :

innocent of baths (it would appear) alike by day and by night—a dryness on their outsides which they compensate by moistening themselves liberally inside with something called “punch”, which we have never seen or tasted, but which we judge, from its recorded effects upon the Pickwickians to have been highly intoxicating.

It will be interesting to take a brief survey of some of these matters in respect of which the passing of two or three generations seems to have brought us into so new a world.

TRAVELLING.

Improvement in our means of travel and communication is not merely one of the most noticeable but is really the most important of all the changes which the past hundred years have brought us. For, apart from its direct effect upon our daily life, it is the root cause of numberless social changes great and small. The thousands who have never used a train, or a telegram, are almost as much affected as the millions who use them daily; for the train and the telegram bring us food for both body and mind. The banana in London, the top-hat in Japan, international conferences, a Chinese parliament, comparative religion, the football edition—these are but items of the medley they have brought, portentous in every sense. They have stimulated scientific discovery and invention in countless directions; they have been important factors in creating machinery, and essential factors in creating the conditions necessary for its vast development. From them and these far-reaching consequences of theirs springs the economic revolution which has concentrated whole industries into a few towns or districts, and which has crushed the small craftsmen while creating the “Trust”.

A train journey to-day is more than thrice as fast and cheap as a coach drive in the old days; and as for comfort, Mr. Pickwick little dreamed of such luxuries as we associate with

names like "The Flying Scotsman", "The Irish Mail", and "The Cornish Express". In his time a journey, say from London to York, took about twenty-four hours, including the intervals of half an hour each which were allowed for meals. The fare was three times the penny per mile which a train journey costs, and to this was added the expense of meals and of coachmen's tips: the last no trifle, since three successive drivers were needed on such a journey, and each expected half-a-crown from every passenger. Money received as tips no doubt formed a considerable part of the £1,180 which Mr. Weller senior made over to Mr. Pickwick.

In fine weather the top of a coach must have been a much better place than the inside of a railway carriage, inasmuch as horses are more beautiful than engines, and old country inns than modern stations. The pleasure of a coach journey is graphically described by Dickens in his account of how the Pickwickians travelled to Dingley Dell for Christmas, and it is a subject which has appealed to many writers, notably to De Quincey in *The English Mail Coach* and to Washington Irving in *Old Christmas*. In wet weather, however, it was a very different story. Your seat had to be booked beforehand, so that if it was a wet night you must either go or forfeit the ticket. Mackintoshes not having been invented, the thickest wraps were at last wet through; the seat under you was soaked; and as the luggage was piled on the roof of the coach, and some of the passengers had to sit with their backs to it, you might presently find water running down the back of your neck. If you put up the new-fangled affair called an umbrella, your neighbour might protest against being poked in the face by it. Some of your fellow travellers would try to keep up their spirits by drinking themselves into an advanced state of intoxication, and if, amid so many discomforts, you yourself chanced to fall asleep, you ran considerable risk of rolling off the coach as it went round a corner.

The speed of coaches was of course slow according to our ideas, but it was by no means contemptible, especially when two rival coaches started running in opposition. *This happened between Leeds and Barnsley a few years later than the date of the publication of *Pickwick*, and the nineteen miles were covered in an hour and a quarter. At Wakefield, where they changed horses, sixteen men were waiting—two to attend to each horse—and the coach was ready for the road again in a few moments, beating the record of eighty seconds which De Quincey tells us had been attained in 1825. Traveling at fifteen miles an hour behind four good horses must have provided quite as fine excitement as twice the pace does now in a motor-car.

It is to the motor-car and the bicycle that the old coaching inns owe their renewed prosperity after the period of decay into which they were plunged by the advent of railways. "The Great White Horse" at Ipswich now exhibits the sign of the Automobile Association, and is no less flourishing than in the day when it was the scene of Mr. Pickwick's strange adventure. Over the door of its ugly square block of grey brick and stucco there still stands a statue of a white horse, though it can hardly be the same "rampacious animal distantly resembling an insane cart-horse" that Dickens speaks of.

Mr. Pickwick had no adventures with highwaymen, but considerable danger still attached even at that time to the transmission of valuables. The guards of coaches were often tipped at the rate of £20 a year each by bankers who confided parcels of money to them for conveyance, for it was only a short time before that a more efficient system of police had superseded the Bow Street "runners". The latter name, though not occurring in *Pickwick*, was still in familiar use and is found in the next book that Dickens wrote, *Oliver Twist*.

When the Early Victorian traveller wished to travel away

from the stage-coach routes, he usually had recourse to the saddle-horse, or to the chaise driven by a postilion who rode upon one of the horses. Caldecott's illustrations to *John Gilpin* have familiarized us with the details of both these forms of travel. In London there was the cab—a butt for Sam Weller's wit and for that of many others throughout the next fifty years, as the pages of *Punch* and the memory of many can testify. The "taxi" and the "hansom" have nothing, and even the "four-wheeler" very little, in common with the wretchedly-horsed old "growlers" or "crawlers". When Mr. Pickwick made use of one of these vehicles, Sam Weller described him as "having two miles of danger at eightpence," alluding either to the risk of the cab's sudden dissolution or, ironically, to the driving of its Jehu. Lastly there was the sedan-chair, which had no wheels, took only one passenger, and was carried by two or four bearers. Of the tram-car there was no prototype, however primitive, though we might have expected the use of rails quite independently of the invention of the locomotive.

EATING AND DRINKING.

Among the social changes which the period has witnessed, one of the most conspicuous is the growth of sobriety in all those classes of society whose wealth is sufficient to provide at all easily a better form of recreation than drink. The expression "as drunk as a lord" has lost its force. Drunkenness in Dickens's day was no longer, as it was in Shakespeare's, "a most gentlemanly sin," but it was still a venial one. It is noticeable that the ladies at Dingley Dell quite forgot, after the lapse of a night, the disgust with which they had received the inebriated gentlemen returning late from their cricket-match. No one, not even the author himself, seemed to think the worse of Mr. Pickwick for his over-indulgence on that or any other occasion.

Nevertheless, the excessive consumption of cold punch

which landed Mr. Pickwick in the pound was, as Mr. Wardle hinted, a thing to be kept private even at the cost of allowing the practical joker to escape retribution. Public opinion had begun to condemn drunkenness, and temperance societies were being formed. These, however, apparently gained little sympathy from Dickens, who was less moved by the self-made miseries of intemperance than by the law-made miseries which he pictures for us in prison and workhouse. Perhaps the temperance societies too often afforded a home for the cant of humbugs, who were always, wherever he found them, the targets for his keenest shafts. The arch-humbag Stiggins was the leading light of such a society; but the ridicule which Dickens pours upon the scene of its deliberations must not be mistaken for general contempt of the nascent temperance movement.

If we turn to *A Tale of Two Cities*, which Dickens wrote twenty-three years later, we see that people were conscious of having become superior to their grandfathers in this matter of drink, though their standard of sobriety seems as insufficient to us as ours may to our grandchildren. The following quotation from *A Tale of Two Cities*, published in 1859, refers to the year 1780. "What the two drank together between Hilary Term and Michaelmas might have floated a king's ship. Those were drinking days, and most men drank hard. So very great is the improvement Time has brought about in such habits that a moderate statement of the quantity of wine and punch which one man would swallow in the course of a night without any detriment to his reputation as a perfect gentleman, would seem, in these days, a ridiculous exaggeration."

It is no wonder that the typical old aristocrat, or even the elderly gentleman of any rank, whom we find in the plays and novels of a century ago, almost invariably suffered from gout and the bad temper consequent thereon.

Meat as well as drink played its part generously in

producing those afflictions of age. We need not go beyond *Pickwick* for evidence of that: the sociability and good cheer that pervade its pages are accompanied by an excessive readiness to hymn the Roast Beef of Old England in very practical fashion. Not only were occasions of feasting many, but the ordinary fare was more copious, though less varied, than ours. To a substantial breakfast and lunch succeeded dinner at about five o'clock, a function no less important then than now, although Society had not yet evolved the black swallow-tail suit and did not demand the donning of any uniform. The early hour left time for another good meal at supper. To all meals a variety of alcoholic drinks were appropriate. They were hardly less appropriate between meals, at least in the opinion of those persons who are typified in *Pickwick* by Ben Allen and Bob Sawyer.

But let us be just to our ancestors. We must not remark upon their liberal drinking without mention of their moderate smoking. In *Pickwick* the smoke-room has not yet become an institution: Bob Sawyer and his friend have to smoke by the kitchen fire; their smoking in the street by day is mentioned as a breach of good manners. The invention of the cigarette did much to undermine the stricter code which prevailed when smoking implied a clay-pipe or a cigar. But even on occasions where these were appropriate, as at the cricket supper, we find no mention of them, and only two or three are depicted in Seymour's drawing of the Club listening to Mr. Pickwick's address.

ELECTORAL CHANGES.

The subject of Eating and Drinking affords a natural transition to that of Politics—as we are reminded by Dickens's choice of the name Eatanswill. The modern reader may well wonder whether the chapters devoted to it are sheer caricature. He may recognize Beer as something which plays

a part in elections now, no less than then ; but the part is, in the main, a different one. "The Trade" is now an organized and powerful force in party politics : it was nothing of the kind in 1836, for it had as yet no reason to fight to maintain its position. It supplied impartially to both sides the wherewithal to intoxicate their supporters. In fact there was nothing improbable in Sam Weller's declaration that the independent voters at "The Peacock" had been dragged out to the pump to fit them for the exercise of their citizen rights after a night spent under the supper-table. Elections, even at a rather later date, and within the experience of many still living, were of such a kind that we may fairly regard Eatanswill as a typical borough. The towns of Sudbury and Ipswich are rival claimants for the rather doubtful honour of having served Dickens as his model.

There are many who grumble at the unpleasant or unsatisfactory character of our modern general elections. They involve great expense. They are protracted over two or three weeks, although it has been found possible in most other civilized countries to have the same polling day for every constituency. The franchise is limited by the exclusion of all women and of those men whose poverty or whose profession prevents them from having a settled home. Plural votes are given to large property owners, not in proportion to the amount of their property, but according to the number of constituencies over which it happens to be scattered. The constituencies vary from under 2,000 voters to over 50,000, with a consequent difference in the value of the vote. There is no provision like the continental system of "second ballots" for ensuring that where there are more than two candidates the successful one shall have a clear majority of votes. The influence of money is still enormous in many more or less direct ways ; all this is far from exhausting the list of inconsistencies and abuses which

might be cited. The grumblers can take comfort by reflecting how much worse nearly all these evils were in the days of Eatanswill. Each town took several days, or even weeks, to poll. The cost of returning a single member then was sometimes comparable with that of electing a whole Parliament now, and the power of money was correspondingly greater. Until the Reform Act of 1832—only four years before *Pickwick* was published—Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, and Bradford had no member of Parliament of their own, while there were other constituencies where the voters numbered only a few score.

At the elections themselves the unpleasantnesses of to-day were intensified manifold. The very arrangement of the hustings tended to encourage rowdiness. It was a wooden scaffolding set up in the market-place or chief street of the town, and on nomination day the mayor stood in the middle of it while the rival candidates with their chief supporters stood at opposite ends. This plan lessened the opportunities for personal conflicts on the hustings itself, though it did not always prevent them; but it is easy to imagine how it stimulated the excitement of the intoxicated mob below. The incidents to which it gave rise were not always so harmlessly ludicrous as that which befell Hudson, "The Railway King," on his defeat at Darlington, when a stalwart fishwife expressed her sympathy by forcing her way on to the hustings and vigorously embracing him despite his struggles. The nomination of the candidates and the declaration of the result always took place on the hustings; the voting sometimes took place there, and sometimes at the Town Hall.

Each elector had to give his vote by word of mouth, and the list of voters on each side was published in the newspapers. This made bribery and intimidation very easy. At Kirkstall in 1842 the Earl's steward stood by the polling station to watch 160 of his master's tenants give their votes, each tenant knowing quite well that a vote given in opposi-

tion to the Earl's wishes would involve dismissal from his farm. Evictions of cottagers for political motives are said still to take place in the South of England, though, on account of the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, the landlord who thus abuses his position has to be careful to conceal the real motive of his action. Still more important has been the effect of the Ballot Act of 1872, which made the voting secret, so that any cottager can now be safe against all forms of intimidation if he is content to give his vote and abstain from all public participation in the contest.

Things were very different at the time when *Pickwick* was written. A voter going to the hustings must have felt sometimes that he was almost taking his life in his hands. If he tried to reach the polling station without assistance he was very likely to fail unless he had exceptional strength or was known to be on the side favoured by the mob. As late as 1853 a party of voters who tried to drive to the poll were held up by the crowd, and when they attempted to pursue their way on foot were only enabled to proceed by the help of a prominent political opponent whose ideas of fair-play were in advance of the times. Mr. Pickwick's adventures give no exaggerated idea of the fights which often marked the nomination day. At Wakefield in 1830 a Whig mob was driven out of the town by a Tory one, and a man was killed. In 1835 a meeting of Whigs in the Cloth Hall at Leeds was broken up by men on the roof who threw down slates. At about the same time a serious riot occurred in the Haymarket at Sheffield; a body of soldiers who were present under Lord Wharnccliffe, being stoned by the mob, fired in reply, and eleven persons were shot.

Occurrences so serious as these cannot be attributed primarily to the open method of voting. They resulted from the political excitement of the time of the great Reform Bill of 1832. We see that a crowd will behave similarly to-day if it is stirred deeply—whether it be a crowd of Irishmen

demanding Home Rule, of "Suffragettes" claiming the Vote, or of Englishmen seeking to silence "Pro-Poers". But whereas these modern disturbances have been exceptional, and the ordinary election is an orderly affair, the voting on the hustings used to produce an orgy even when the rival candidates were as similar politically as Tweedledum and Tweedledee—a not uncommon occurrence when they both desired to enter Parliament because they considered it the best club in England. A very select club it was in those days, before Labour Members were dreamt of, and huge prices were paid for the privilege of election. Electors in some boroughs were absurdly few, but expenses were high and bribes were often the largest item in the bill. How systematically bribery was carried on may be seen from the following account written by one who had taken part in such elections: "A room with two doors into it would be hired at an inn, and kept in darkness. If you were a corrupt voter you were told that it would be a good thing for you if you promised to vote for Smith. You agreed to do so if you could have £5. The bargain being made, you were taken to one door of the darkened room, and there somebody took you by the hand and led you through. On the way through somebody else put £5 into the other hand. You did not see any one do it, and you could not say who gave you the money."

The total amounts spent by candidates were often enormous. At the Yorkshire election in 1808 the Whig and Tory spent between them nearly a quarter of a million pounds, and in 1837 Lord Fitzwilliam's election agent stated that £120,000 had passed through his hands. These sums will cease to surprise us when we reflect how many things the candidates had to pay for. In particular they defrayed the cost of bringing voters to the poll, and in many places this must have exceeded the cost of bribes. In Yorkshire, for instance, the only polling station was the Castle Yard at York, and fares

had to be paid for voters from all parts of the county. These were the high coach fares described above, and to them were often added hotel expenses for several days: for the voter was sometimes in no hurry to record his vote and thereby terminate the free holiday which he was enjoying at the candidate's expense. Even if he had the best will in the world his intention to vote might be long frustrated. It is recorded of one of Wilberforce's supporters at York that he attended early and late at the poll for three days in vain. Yet this man, a Quaker, must have used every endeavour; for the Quakers of Yorkshire had resolved to vote at their own expense for the champion of the abolition of slavery, and he had walked fifty miles rather than let his coach fare be paid.

The modern law, if still very imperfect, has effected vast improvements. It nullifies an election if the candidate or any one of his supporters is proved to have given any sort of bribe. It demands an official statement of the expenses incurred, and limits them to a reasonable figure. It forbids the payment of any travelling expenses for voters, though free travel may be provided for them by the owners of private vehicles; and, most important of all, it allows nobody to see how the voter marks his ballot-paper. In each constituency the poll is completed in a single day, and numerous polling stations are provided to suit the convenience of every district. The plan of sending round nomination papers to be signed by the candidates' chief supporters has put an end to the old riotous nomination days, and the organization of the police force has lessened rowdiness generally. The great extension of the franchise which caused such excitement in 1832 has been carried considerably further by the Acts of 1867 and 1884. Now, for a quarter of a century, there has been no alteration at all in the law, but a number of important changes have recently come within the range of practical politics, including the abolition of plural votes, the payment of members of the House of Commons, the pay-

ment of the official election expenses, and, most recently of all, the Referendum.

•

COCKNEY PRONUNCIATION.

Sam Weller must be taken as an authoritative exponent of the Cockney dialect of the period. He was Cockney bred as well as born, a product of the street—not of the school. “I took a great deal o’ pains with his eddication, sir,” says Mr. Weller senior with paternal pride to Mr. Pickwick; “let him run in the streets when he was very young, and shift for his-self. It’s the only way to make a boy sharp, sir.” In that environment the youthful Sam acquired many sterling qualities, and along with them a dialect which strikes us most by its unlikeness to its modern counterpart. In his gift of irrepressible repartee Sam shows his kinship with the Cockney as we know him to-day, and he occasionally uses a phrase which has the most modern of flavours, as when he says to Mr. Winkle, “You’re a amiable young man, sir, *I don’t think*”; but much of the language spoken by him and his father would not now be so well understood in London as in some parts of rural Essex. Such expressions as “afore I see you,” “contrairey,” “wittles,” “has he been a-purwidin’ for ye?” are quite typical of the Essex dialect, but they would not be used by a modern Cockney. Again, an Essex man might easily say, as Mr. Weller senior did, “Wot’s that you’re a-doing of?” but a Cockney would be more likely to say, “Wat are y’ up to nah?” The confusion between the letters “v” and “w”, which is such a prominent feature of the Wellers’ language, presents no serious difficulty to the modern Cockney; he may sometimes put a “w” where his fellow citizen in the West prefers a “v”, but he does not reverse the process, as the Wellers so frequently did. The famous incident when Mr. Weller senior shouted, “Put it down a ‘we’, my lord,” could not occur now in a London police-court.

It is in the avoidance of troublesome consonantal sounds that the Pickwickian and the modern Cockney pronunciations are most alike. "Lor, do adun [=have done], Mr. Weller", exclaims Mary under a protracted embrace, and a modern Mary might say the same. With similar consonantal euphony Mr. Weller declares his ability "to look arter his-self." Coachmen to-day would probably not aspire to the accuracy of that "h", their aspirations being commonly reserved for all sorts of words which are not found under "h" in the dictionary. The Wellers, though not blameless in this respect—for they speak of harm-chairs and hobervations—were comparatively free from the fault. It is the exchange of the "h" difficulty for the confusion of "v" and "w" which mainly accounts for the sense of strangeness that we have in reading the Pickwickian Cockney.

The degree of permanence, however, which we find in the Cockney dialect is really more worthy of remark than the obvious changes which strike us at first sight. We might easily have expected to find these changes greater than they are, for the population of London has little solidarity or continuity. Its poor are a short-lived race and constantly on the move. Statistics show that without recruits from the country their families would very seldom reach the fourth generation. In the days before travelling had been made easy the speech of East London would naturally be most influenced by that of the nearest country districts, and this may account for the similarities which we have noted between the dialect of the Wellers and that now spoken in Essex. But since their day there has been a great mingling of races in the east of London, and the dialect there derives its newest vocabulary from far more distant sources. Besides its permanent settlers, East London has its summer migrants, the Italian organ-grinders and ice-cream sellers. Purveyors of the music and luxuries of the poor, they fittingly leave us their word "dona" for sweetheart when winter takes them

back to the sunny South. From quite another quarter comes the word "oofish", or "oof" (= money), whose derivation reminds us that the colony of German Jews like payments "Auf dem Tisch", i. e. cash down on the counter. From farthest of all the Gypsies have brought "bloke", the Hindustani "loke" (= people)—unless indeed, as can be maintained, it is only the Dutch ("blok") for a blockhead.

REFORM OF PRISONS.

Whether or not the poverty which beset Dickens in his early youth was a blessing in disguise for himself, it certainly blessed the English-speaking world through his books: for he suffered no such prolonged and intense hardship as is apt to embitter even a good man, and the world has gained by the general widening of his human sympathies. It has profited, too, in certain special ways, for the hardships which young Charles Dickens suffered made him an ardent missionary for the reform of various social abuses whose cruelty he had felt or witnessed, and they equipped him with an intimate knowledge of those abuses which fitted him to attack them with success. Foremost among them stood the Poor Law, with its wretched administration and its inhumanity to children, which he exposed in *Oliver Twist*, his next important book after *Pickwick*.

Pickwick itself, being essentially a work of humour, would seem to give little opportunity for propagandist work of that kind; yet the satire upon Dodson and Fogg must have made the world a distinctly less pleasant and profitable place for the modern counterparts of those gentlemen; and when we come to such scenes in the Fleet Prison as the death of the Chancery prisoner we have the full force of Dickens's pathos, heightened perhaps by its setting among lighter chapters. He could hardly have chosen a more effective means for arousing the storms of indignation that he wished to see

blowing through the musty labyrinth of the Law to clear away the dusty cobwebs which could so choke and poison the lives of Englishmen unlucky enough to live under its "protection".

The committal of his father to the Marshalsea prison may have helped to impress on Dickens in his boyhood the folly of dealing with debtors by imprisonment. The absurdity of that procedure is obvious enough to us who look at it with eyes unblinded by custom; but Dickens's criticism of our penal system extended to abuses from which it has not even yet been freed. If his attack was not so pointed as that delivered later by Charles Reade in *It's Never Too Late to Mend*, and if it did not draw a public acknowledgement of its usefulness from the Home Office like Mr. Galsworthy's recent play, which vividly exposes the disastrous effects of modern "Justice", yet it voices the same conviction that Vengeance is no proper function of Man's. When a criminal pays the Law's penalty of his crime the unthinking verdict of the crowd is, "Serve him right." But how can we tell, these writers ask us, what really serves him right in so complex and unequal a world? In *A Tale of Two Cities* (Bk. II, ch. ii) Dickens pictured our Law as opening wide a thousand doors of temptation, nay, almost of compulsion, to bring the weak and the poor within its courts—doors which it ought to have been infinitely more careful to close than its jealously-guarded prison gates. A suggestion of the same picture occurs in his Preface to the reprint of *Pickwick* with which this Introduction concludes.

It is difficult to estimate the share his masterpieces may have had in producing the public opinion which resulted in the better state of things we now enjoy, but it must have been enormous. As in the sphere of penal reform, so too in others there have been works of fiction whose propagandist success has been more immediately obvious, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Appearing, as that book did, at the psychological

moment, it played a part in the abolition of slavery which ranked, in its separate sphere, with the labours of Lloyd Garrison and the martyrdom of John Brown. No revolution immediately followed the publication of any of Dickens's works, but the influence of his words has been at work upon thousands of readers year after year, and out of the five departments of state which he enumerates in his Preface quoted hereunder—Magistracy, Poor Law, Schools, Prisons, Sanitation—the change now visible in all but the Magistracy is little less than revolutionary.

“I have found it curious and interesting,” he says, “looking over the sheets of this reprint, to mark what important social improvements have taken place about us, almost imperceptibly, since they were originally written. The licence of Counsel, and the degrees to which Juries are ingeniously bewildered, are yet susceptible of moderation; while an improvement in the mode of conducting Parliamentary Elections (and even Parliaments too, perhaps) is still within the bounds of possibility. But legal reforms have pared the claws of Messrs. Dodson & Fogg; a spirit of self-respect, mutual forbearance, education, and co-operation for such good ends, has diffused itself among their clerks; places far apart are brought together, to the present convenience and advantage of the Public, and to the certain destruction, in time, of a host of petty jealousies, blindnesses and prejudices, by which the Public alone have always been the sufferers; the laws relating to imprisonment for debt are altered; and the Fleet Prison is pulled down!

“Who knows, but by the time the series reaches its conclusion, it may be discovered that there are even magistrates in town and country who should be taught to shake hands every day with Common Sense and Justice; that even Poor Laws may have mercy on the weak, the aged, and unfortunate; that Schools on the broad principles of Christianity, are the best adornment for the length and breadth of this

civilized land ; that Prison doors should be barred on the outside, no less heavily and carefully than they are barred within ; that the universal diffusion of common means of decency and health is as much the right of the poorest of the poor, as it is indispensable to the safety of the rich, and of the State ; that a few petty boards and bodies—less than drops in the great ocean of humanity, which roars around them—are not for ever to let loose Fever and Consumption on God's creatures at their will, or always to keep their jobbing little fiddles going, for a Dance of Death."

BEDALES PREPARATORY SCHOOL, PETERSFIELD,
July, 1911.

POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF THE PICKWICK CLUB



CHAPTER I

THE PICKWICKIANS

THE first ray of light which illumines the gloom, and converts into a dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity, and nice discrimination, with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted.

"May 12, 1827. Joseph Smiggers, Esq., P.V.P.M.P.C.,* presiding. The following resolutions unanimously agreed to:—

"That this Association has heard read, with feelings of unmingled satisfaction, and unqualified approval, the paper communicated by Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C.,† entitled 'Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats;' and that this Association does hereby return its warmest thanks to the said Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., for the same.

"That while this Association is deeply sensible of the advantages which must accrue to the cause of science from the production to which they have just adverted,—no less

* Perpetual Vice-President—Member Pickwick Club.

† General Chairman—Member Pickwick Club

than from the unwearied researches of Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., in Hornsey, Highgate, Brixton, and Camberwell,—they cannot but entertain a lively sense of the inestimable benefits which must inevitably result from carrying the speculations of that learned man into a wider field, from extending his travels, and consequently enlarging his sphere of observation, to the advancement of knowledge, and the diffusion of learning.

“That, with the view just mentioned, this Association has taken into its serious consideration a proposal, emanating from the aforesaid Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., and three other Pickwickians hereinafter named, for forming a new branch of United Pickwickians, under the title of The Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club.

“That the said proposal has received the sanction and approval of this Association.

“That the Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club is therefore hereby constituted ; and that Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., Tracy Tupman, Esq., M.P.C., Augustus Snodgrass, Esq., M.P.C., and Nathaniel Winkle, Esq., M.P.C., are hereby nominated and appointed members of the same ; and that they be requested to forward, from time to time, authenticated accounts of their journeys and investigations, of their observations of character and manners, and of the whole of their adventures, together with all tales and papers to which local scenery or associations may give rise, to the Pickwick Club, stationed in London.

“That this Association cordially recognises the principle of every member of the Corresponding Society defraying his own travelling expenses ; and that it sees no objection whatever to the members of the said society pursuing their inquiries for any length of time they please, upon the same terms.

“That the members of the aforesaid Corresponding Society be, and are, hereby informed, that their proposal to pay the postage of their letters, and the carriage of their parcels, has been deliberated upon by this Association : that this Association considers such proposal worthy of the great minds from which it emanated, and that it hereby signifies its perfect acquiescence therein.”

A casual observer, adds the secretary, to whose notes we are indebted for the following account—a casual observer might possibly have remarked nothing extraordinary in the bald head, and circular spectacles, which were intently

turned towards his (the secretary's) face, during the reading of the above resolutions: to those who knew that the gigantic brain of Pickwick was working beneath that forehead, and that the beaming eyes of Pickwick were twinkling behind these glasses, the sight was indeed an interesting one. There sat the man who had traced to their source the mighty ponds of Hampstead, and agitated the scientific world with his Theory of Tittlebats, as calm and unmoved as the deep waters of the one on a frosty day, or as a solitary specimen of the other in the inmost recesses of an earthen jar. And how much more interesting did the spectacle become, when, starting into full life and animation, as a simultaneous call for "Pickwick" burst from his followers, that illustrious man slowly mounted into the Windsor chair, on which he had been previously seated, and addressed the club himself had founded. What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present! The eloquent Pickwick, with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat tails, and the other waving in air, to assist his glowing declamation; his elevated position revealing those tights and gaiters, which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clothed them—if we may use the expression—inspired voluntary awe and respect; surrounded by the men who had volunteered to share the perils of his travels, and who were destined to participate in the glories of his discoveries. On his right hand sat Mr. Tracy Tupman—the too susceptible Tupman, who to the wisdom and experience of maturer years superadded the enthusiasm and ardour of a boy, in the most interesting and pardonable of human weaknesses—love. Time and feeding had expanded that once romantic form; the black silk waistcoat had become more and more developed; inch by inch had the gold watch-chain beneath it disappeared from within the range of Tupman's vision; and gradually had the capacious chin encroached upon the borders of the white cravat: but the soul of Tupman had known no change—admiration of the fair sex was still its ruling passion. On the left of his great leader sat the poetic Snodgrass, and near him again the sporting Winkle, the former poetically enveloped in a mysterious blue coat with a canine-skin collar, and the latter communicating additional lustre to a new green shooting coat, plaid neckerchief, and closely-fitted drabs

Mr. Pickwick's oration upon this occasion, together with the debate thereon, is entered on the Transactions of the Club.' Both bear a strong affinity to the discussions of other celebrated bodies; and, as it is always interesting to trace a resemblance between the proceedings of great men, we transfer the entry to these pages.

"Mr. Pickwick observed (says the Secretary) that fame was dear to the heart of every man. Poetic fame was dear to the heart of his friend Snodgrass; the fame of conquest was equally dear to his friend Tupman; and the desire of earning fame in the sports of the field, the air, and the water, was uppermost in the breast of his friend Winkle. He (Mr. Pickwick) would not deny that he was influenced by human passions, and human feelings (cheers)—possibly by human weaknesses—(loud cries of 'No'); but this he would say, that if ever the fire of self-importance broke out in his bosom, the desire to benefit the human race in preference effectually quenched it. The praise of mankind was his Swing; philanthropy was his insurance office. (Vehement cheering.) He had felt some pride—he acknowledged it freely, and let his enemies make the most of it—he had felt some pride when he presented his Tittlebatian Theory to the world; it might be celebrated or it might not. (A cry of 'It is,' and great cheering.) He would take the assertion of that honourable Pickwickian whose voice he had just heard—it was celebrated; but if the fame of that treatise were to extend to the furthest confines of the known world, the pride with which he should reflect on the authorship of that production would be as nothing compared with the pride with which he looked around him, on this, the proudest moment of his existence. (Cheers.) He was a humble individual. (No, no.) Still he could not but feel that they had selected him for a service of great honour, and of some danger. Travelling was in a troubled state, and the minds of coachmen were unsettled. Let them look abroad and contemplate the scenes which were enacting around them. Stage coaches were upsetting in all directions, horses were bolting, boats were overturning, and boilers were bursting. (Cheers—a voice 'No.') No! (Cheers.) Let that honourable Pickwickian who cried 'No' so loudly come forward and deny it, if he could. (Cheers.) Who was it that cried 'No?' (Enthusiastic cheering.) Was it some vain and disappointed man—he would not



MR. PICKWICK ADDRESSES THE CLUB

say haberdasher—(loud cheers)—who, jealous of the praise which had been—perhaps undeservedly—bestowed on his (Mr. Pickwick's) researches, and smarting under the censure which had been heaped upon his own feeble attempts at rivalry, now took this vile and calumnious mode of—

“Mr. BLOTTON (of Aldgate) rose to order. Did the honourable Pickwickian allude to him? (Cries of ‘Order,’ ‘Chair,’ ‘Yes,’ ‘No,’ ‘Go on,’ ‘Leave off,’ &c.)

“Mr. PICKWICK would not put up to be put down by clamour. He *had* alluded to the honourable gentleman. (Great excitement.)

“Mr. BLOTTON would only say then, that he repelled the hon. gent.'s false and scurrilous accusation, with profound contempt. (Great cheering.) The hon. gent. was a humbug. (Immense confusion, and loud cries of ‘Chair,’ and ‘Order.’)

“Mr. A. SNODGRASS rose to order. He threw himself upon the chair. (Hear.) He wished to know whether this disgraceful contest between two members of that club should be allowed to continue. (Hear, hear.)

“The CHAIRMAN was quite sure the hon. Pickwickian would withdraw the expression he had just made use of.

“Mr. BLOTTON, with all possible respect for the chair, was quite sure he would not.

“The CHAIRMAN felt it his imperative duty to demand of the honourable gentleman, whether he had used the expression which had just escaped him in a common sense.

“Mr. BLOTTON had no hesitation in saying that he had not—he had used the word in its Pickwickian sense. (Hear, hear.) He was bound to acknowledge that, personally, he entertained the highest regard and esteem for the honourable gentleman; he had merely considered him a humbug in a Pickwickian point of view. (Hear, hear.)

“Mr. PICKWICK felt much gratified by the fair, candid, and full explanation of his honourable friend. He begged it to be at once understood, that his own observations had been merely intended to bear a Pickwickian construction. (Cheers.)”

Here the entry terminates, as we have no doubt the debate did also, after arriving at such a highly satisfactory and intelligible point. We have no official statement of the facts which the reader will find recorded in the next chapter, but they have been carefully collated from letters and other MS. authorities, so unquestionably genuine as to justify their narration in a connected form.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAY'S JOURNEY, AND THE FIRST EVENING'S ADVENTURES ; WITH THEIR CONSEQUENCES

THAT punctual servant of all work, the sun, had just risen, and begun to strike a light on the morning of the thirteenth of May, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, when Mr. Samuel Pickwick burst like another sun from his slumbers, threw open his chamber window, and looked out upon the world beneath. Goswell Street was at his feet, Goswell Street was on his right hand—as far as the eye could reach, Goswell Street extended on his left ; and the opposite side of Goswell Street was over the way. “Such,” thought Mr. Pickwick, “are the narrow views of those philosophers who, content with examining the things that lie before them, look not to the truths which are hidden beyond. As well might I be content to gaze on Goswell Street for ever, without one effort to penetrate to the hidden countries which on every side surround it.” And having given vent to this beautiful reflection, Mr. Pickwick proceeded to put himself into his clothes, and his clothes into his portmanteau. Great men are seldom over scrupulous in the arrangement of their attire ; the operation of shaving, dressing, and coffee-imbibing was soon performed : and in another hour, Mr. Pickwick, with his portmanteau in his hand, his telescope in his great-coat pocket, and his note-book in his waistcoat, ready for the reception of any discoveries worthy of being noted down, had arrived at the coach stand in St. Martin's-le-Grand.

“Cab !” said Mr. Pickwick.

“Here you are, sir,” shouted a strange specimen of the human race, in a sackcloth coat, and apron of the same, who with a brass label and number round his neck, looked as if he were catalogued in some collection of rarities. This was the waterman. “Here you are, sir. Now, then, fust cab !”

And the first cab having been fetched from the public-house, where he had been smoking his first pipe, Mr. Pickwick and his portmanteau were thrown into the vehicle.

"Golden Cross," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Only a bob's worth, Tommy," cried the driver, sulkily, for the information of his friend the waterman, as the cab drove off.

"How old is that horse, my friend?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his nose with the shilling he had reserved for the fare.

"Forty-two," replied the driver, eyeing him askant.

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, laying his hand upon his note-book. The driver reiterated his former statement. Mr. Pickwick looked very hard at the man's face, but his features were immovable, so he noted down the fact forthwith.

"And how long do you keep him out at a time?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, searching for further information.

"Two or three weeks," replied the man.

"Weeks!" said Mr. Pickwick in astonishment—and out came the note-book again.

"He lives at Pentonwil when he's at home," observed the driver, coolly, "but we seldom takes him home, on account of his weakness."

"On account of his weakness!" reiterated the perplexed Mr. Pickwick.

"He always falls down when he's took out o' the cab," continued the driver, "but when he's in it, we bears him up werry tight, and takes him in werry short, so as he can't werry well fall down; and we've got a pair o' precious large wheels on, so ven he *does* move, they run after him, and he must go on—he can't help it."

Mr. Pickwick entered every word of this statement in his note-book, with the view of communicating it to the club, as a singular instance of the tenacity of life in horses, under trying circumstances. The entry was scarcely completed when they reached the Golden Cross. Down jumped the driver, and out got Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle, who had been anxiously waiting the arrival of their illustrious leader, crowded to welcome him.

"Here's your fare," said Mr. Pickwick, holding out the shilling to the driver.

What was the learned man's astonishment, when that

unaccountable person flung the money on the pavement, and requested in figurative terms to be allowed the pleasure of fighting him (Mr. Pickwick) for the amount!

"You are mad," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Or drunk," said Mr. Winkle.

"Or both," said Mr. Tupman.

"Come on!" said the cab-driver, sparring away like clockwork. "Come on—all four on you."

"Here's a lark!" shouted half-a-dozen hackney coachmen. "Go to work, Sam,"—and they crowded with great glee round the party.

"What's the row, Sam?" inquired one gentleman in black calico sleeves.

"Row!" replied the cabman, "what did he want my number for?"

"I didn't want your number," said the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

"What did you take it for, then?" inquired the cabman.

"I didn't take it," said Mr. Pickwick, indignantly.

"Would any body believe," continued the cab-driver, appealing to the crowd, "would any body believe as an informer 'ud go about in a man's cab, not only takin' down his number, but ev'ry word he says into the bargain" (a light flashed upon Mr. Pickwick—it was the note book).

"Did he though?" inquired another cabman.

"Yes, did he," replied the first; "and then arter aggerawatin' me to assault him, gets three witnesses here to prove it. But I'll give it him, if I've six months for it. Come on!" and the cabman dashed his hat upon the ground, with a reckless disregard of his own private property, and knocked Mr. Pickwick's spectacles off, and followed up the attack with a blow on Mr. Pickwick's nose, and another on Mr. Pickwick's chest, and a third in Mr. Snodgrass's eye, and a fourth, by way of variety, in Mr. Tupman's waistcoat, and then danced into the road, and then back again to the pavement, and finally dashed the whole temporary supply of breath out of Mr. Winkle's body; and all in half-a-dozen seconds.

"Where's an officer?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Put 'em under the pump," suggested a hot-pieman.

"You shall smart for this," gasped Mr. Pickwick.

"Informers!" shouted the crowd.

"Come on," cried the cabman, who had been sparring without cessation the whole time.



THE PUGNACIOUS CABMAN

The mob had hitherto been passive spectators of the scene, but as the intelligence of the Pickwickians being informers was spread among them, they began to canvass with considerable vivacity the propriety of enforcing the heated pastry-vendor's proposition; and there is no saying what acts of personal aggression they might have committed had not the affray been unexpectedly terminated by the interposition of a new comer.

"What's the fun?" said a rather tall thin young man in a green coat, emerging suddenly from the coach yard.

"Informers!" shouted the crowd again.

"We are not," roared Mr. Pickwick, in a tone which to any dispassionate listener, carried conviction with it.

"Ain't you, though,—ain't you?" said the young man, appealing to Mr. Pickwick, and making his way through the crowd by the infallible process of elbowing the countenances of its component members.

That learned man in a few hurried words explained the real state of the case.

"Come along, then," said he of the green coat, lugging Mr. Pickwick after him by main force, and talking the whole way. "Here, No. 924, take your fare, and take yourself off—respectable gentleman,—know him well—none of your nonsense—this way, sir,—where's your friends?—all a mistake, I see—never mind—accidents will happen—best regulated families—never say die—down upon your luck—pull him up—put that in his pipe—like the flavour—damned rascals." And with a lengthened string of similar broken sentences, delivered with extraordinary volubility, the stranger led the way to the travellers' waiting-room, whither he was closely followed by Mr. Pickwick and his disciples.

"Here, waiter!" shouted the stranger, ringing the bell with tremendous violence, "glasses round,—brandy and water, hot and strong, and sweet, and plenty,—eye damaged, sir? Waiter! raw beef-steak for the gentleman's eye,—nothing like raw beef-steak for a bruise, sir; cold lamp-post very good, but lamp-post inconvenient—damned odd standing in the open street half-an hour, with your eye against a lamp-post—eh,—very good—ha! ha!" And the stranger, without stopping to take breath, swallowed at a draught full half-a-pint of the reeking brandy and water, and flung himself into a chair with as much ease as if nothing uncommon had occurred.

While his three companions were busily engaged in proffering their thanks to their new acquaintance, Mr. Pickwick had leisure to examine his costume and appearance.

He was about the middle height, but the thinness of his body, and the length of his legs, gave him the appearance of being much taller. The green coat had been a smart dress garment in the days of swallow-tails, but had evidently in those times adorned a much shorter man than the stranger, for the soiled and faded sleeves scarcely reached to his wrists. It was buttoned closely up to his chin, at the imminent hazard of splitting the back; and an old stock, without a vestige of shirt collar, ornamented his neck. His scanty black trousers displayed here and there those shiny patches which bespeak long service, and were strapped very tightly over a pair of patched and mended shoes, as if to conceal the dirty white stockings, which were nevertheless distinctly visible. His long black hair escaped in negligent waves from beneath each side of his old pinched up hat; and glimpses of his bare wrists might be observed between the tops of his gloves, and the cuffs of his coat sleeves. His face was thin and haggard; but an indescribable air of jaunty impudence and perfect self-possession pervaded the whole man.

Such was the individual on whom Mr. Pickwick gazed through his spectacles (which he had fortunately recovered), and to whom he proceeded, when his friends had exhausted themselves, to return in chosen terms his warmest thanks for his recent assistance.

"Never mind," said the stranger, cutting the address very short, "said enough,—no more; smart chap that cabman—handled his fives well; but if I'd been your friend in the green jemmy—damn me—punch his head,—'cod I would,—pig's whisper—pieman too,—no gammon."

This coherent speech was interrupted by the entrance of the Rochester coachman, to announce that "The Commodore" was on the point of starting.

"Commodore!" said the stranger, starting up, "my coach,—place booked,—one outside—leave you to pay for the brandy and water,—want change for a five,—bad silver—Brummagem buttons—won't do—no go—eh?" and he shook his head most knowingly.

Now it so happened that Mr. Pickwick and his three companions had resolved to make Rochester their first halting place too; and having intimated to their new-found

acquaintance that they were journeying to the same city, they agreed to occupy the seat at the back of the coach, where they could all sit together.

"Up with you," said the stranger, assisting Mr. Pickwick on to the roof with so much precipitation as to impair the gravity of that gentleman's deportment very materially.

"Any luggage, sir?" inquired the coachman.

"Who—I? Brown paper parcel here, that's all,—other luggage gone by water,—packing cases, nailed up—big as houses—heavy, heavy, damned heavy," replied the stranger, as he forced into his pocket as much as he could of the brown paper parcel, which presented most suspicious indications of containing one shirt and a handkerchief.

"Heads, heads—take care of your heads!" cried the loquacious stranger, as they came out under the low archway, which in those days formed the entrance to the coach-yard. "Terrible place—dangerous work—other day—five children—mother—tall lady, eating sandwiches—forgot the arch—crash—knock—children look round—mother's head off—sandwich in her hand—no mouth to put it in—head of a family off—shocking, shocking! Looking at Whitehall, sir?—fine place—little window—somebody else's head off there, eh, sir?—he didn't keep a sharp look-out enough either—eh, sir, eh?"

"I am ruminating," said Mr. Pickwick, "on the strange mutability of human affairs."

"Ah! I see—in at the palace door one day, out at the window the next. Philosopher, sir?"

"An observer of human nature, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, so am I. Most people are when they've little to do and less to get. Poet, sir?"

"My friend Mr. Snodgrass has a strong poetic turn," said Mr. Pickwick.

"So have I," said the stranger. "Epic poem,—ten thousand lines—revolution of July—composed it on the spot—Mars by day, Apollo by night,—bang the field-piece, twang the lyre."

"You were present at that glorious scene sir?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Present! think I was; * fired a musket,—fired with an

* A remarkable instance of the prophetic force of Mr. Jingle's imagination; this dialogue occurring in the year 1827, and the Revolution in 1830.

idea,—rushed into wine shop—wrote it down—back again—whiz, bang—another idea—wine shop again—pen and ink—back again—cut and slash—noble time, sir. Sportsman, sir?” abruptly turning to Mr. Winkle.

“A little, sir,” replied that gentleman.

“Fine pursuit, sir,—fine pursuit.—Dogs, sir?”

“Not just now,” said Mr. Winkle.

“Ah! you should keep dogs—fine animals—sagacious creatures—dog of my own once—Pointer—surprising instinct—out shooting one day—entering enclosure—whistled—dog stopped—whistled again—Ponto—no go; stock still—called him—Ponto, Ponto—wouldn’t move—dog transfixed—staring at a board—looked up, saw an inscription—‘Game-keeper has orders to shoot all dogs found in this enclosure’—wouldn’t pass it—wonderful dog—valuable dog that—very.”

“Singular circumstance that,” said Mr. Pickwick. “Will you allow me to make a note of it?”

“Certainly, sir, certainly—hundred more anecdotes of the same animal.—Fine girl, sir” (to Mr. Tracy Tupman, who had been bestowing sundry anti-Pickwickian glances on a young lady by the roadside).

“Very!” said Mr. Tupman.

“English girls not so fine as Spanish—noble creatures—jet hair—black eyes—lovely forms—sweet creatures—beautiful.”

“You have been in Spain, sir?” said Mr. Tracy Tupman.

“Lived there—ages.”

“Many conquests, sir?” inquired Mr. Tupman.

“Conquests! Thousands. Don Bolaro Fizzgig—Grandeo—only daughter—Donna Christina—splendid creature—loved me to distraction—jealous father—high-souled daughter—handsome Englishman—Donna Christina in despair—prussic acid—stomach pump in my portmanteau—operation performed—old Bolaro in ecstasies—consent to our union—join hands and floods of tears—romantic story—very.”

“Is the lady in England now, sir?” inquired Mr. Tupman, on whom the description of her charms had produced a powerful impression.

“Dead, sir—dead,” said the stranger, applying to his right eye the brief remnant of a very old cambric handkerchief. “Never recovered the stomach pump—undermined constitution—fell a victim.”



THE SAGACIOUS DOG

"And her father?" inquired the poetic Snodgrass.

"Remorse and misery," replied the stranger. "Sudden disappearance—talk of the whole city—search made every-where—without success—public fountain in the great square suddenly ceased playing—weeks elapsed—still a stoppage—workmen employed to clean it—water drawn off—father-in-law discovered sticking head first in the main pipe, with a full confession in his right boot—took him out, and the fountain played away again, as well as ever."

"Will you allow me to note that little romance down, sir?" said Mr. Snodgrass, deeply affected.

"Certainly, sir, certainly, -fifty more if you like to hear 'em—strange life mine—rather curious history—not extraordinary, but singular."

In this strain, with an occasional glass of ale, by way of parenthesis, when the coach changed horses, did the stranger proceed, until they reached Rochester bridge, by which time the note-books, both of Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Snodgrass, were completely filled with selections from his adventures.

"Magnificent ruin!" said Mr. Augustus Snodgrass, with all the poetic fervour that distinguished him, when they came in sight of the fine old castle.

"What a study for an antiquarian!" were the very words which fell from Mr. Pickwick's mouth, as he applied his telescope to his eye.

"Ah! fine place," said the stranger, "glorious pile—frowning walls—tottering arches—dark nooks—crumbling staircases—Old cathedral too—earthy smell—pilgrims' feet worn away the old steps—little Saxon doors—confessionals like money-takers' boxes at theatres—queer customers those monks—Popes, and Lord Treasurers, and all sorts of old fellows, with great red faces, and broken noses, turning up every day—buff jerkins too—match-locks—Sarcophagus—fine place—old legends too—strange stories: capital;" and the stranger continued to soliloquise until they reached the Bull Inn, in the High Street, where the coach stopped.

"Do you remain here, sir?" inquired Mr. Nathaniel Winkle.

"Here—not I—but you'd better—good house—nice beds—Wright's next house, dear—very dear—half-a-crown in the bill if you look at the waiter—charge you more if you

dine at a friend's than they would if you dined in the coffee-room—rum fellows—very.”

Mr. Winkle turned to Mr. Pickwick, and murmured a few words; a whisper passed from Mr. Pickwick to Mr. Snodgrass, from Mr. Snodgrass to Mr. Tupman, and nods of assent were exchanged. Mr. Pickwick addressed the stranger.

“You rendered us a very important service this morning, sir,” said he, “will you allow us to offer a slight mark of our gratitude by begging the favour of your company at dinner?”

“Great pleasure—not presume to dictate, but broiled fowl and mushrooms—capital thing! what time?”

“Let me see,” replied Mr. Pickwick, referring to his watch, “it is now nearly three. Shall we say five?”

“Suit me excellently,” said the stranger, “five precisely—till then—care of yourselves;” and lifting the pinched-up hat a few inches from his head, and carelessly replacing it very much on one side, the stranger, with half the brown paper parcel sticking out of his pocket, walked briskly up the yard, and turned into the High Street.

“Evidently a traveller in many countries, and a close observer of men and things,” said Mr. Pickwick.

“I should like to see his poem,” said Mr. Snodgrass.

“I should like to have seen that dog,” said Mr. Winkle.

Mr. Tupman said nothing; but he thought of Donna Christina, the stomach pump, and the fountain; and his eyes filled with tears.

A private sitting-room having been engaged, bed-rooms inspected, and dinner ordered, the party walked out to view the city and adjoining neighbourhood.

We do not find, from a careful perusal of Mr. Pickwick's notes on the four towns, Stroud, Rochester, Chatham, and Brompton, that his impressions of their appearance differ in any material point from those of other travellers who have gone over the same ground. His general description is easily abridged.

“The principal productions of these towns,” says Mr. Pickwick, “appear to be soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, officers, and dockyard men. The commodities chiefly exposed for sale in the public streets are marine stores, hardbake, apples, flat-fish, and oysters. The streets present a lively and animated appearance, occasioned chiefly by the conviviality of the military. It is truly delightful

to a philanthropic mind, to see these gallant men staggering along under the influence of an overflow, both of animal and ardent spirits; more especially when we remember that the following them about, and jesting with them, affords a cheap and innocent amusement for the boy population. Nothing (adds Mr. Pickwick) can exceed their good humour. It was but the day before my arrival that one of them had been most grossly insulted in the house of a publican. The barmaid had positively refused to draw him any more liquor; in return for which he had (merely in playfulness) drawn his bayonet, and wounded the girl in the shoulder. And yet this fine fellow was the very first to go down to the house next morning, and express his readiness to overlook the matter, and forget what had occurred.

“The consumption of tobacco in these towns (continues Mr. Pickwick) must be very great: and the smell which pervades the streets must be exceedingly delicious to those who are extremely fond of smoking. A superficial traveller might object to the dirt which is their leading characteristic; but to those who view it as an indication of traffic and commercial prosperity, it is truly gratifying.”

CHAPTER IV

A FIELD DAY AND BIVOUAC. MORE NEW FRIENDS. AN INVITATION TO THE COUNTRY

MANY authors entertain, not only a foolish, but a really dishonest objection to acknowledge the sources from whence they derive much valuable information. We have no such feeling. We are merely endeavouring to discharge, in an upright manner, the responsible duties of our editorial functions; and whatever ambition we might have felt under other circumstances to lay claim to the authorship of these adventures, a regard for truth forbids us to do more than claim the merit of their judicious arrangement and impartial narration. The *Pickwick* papers are our New River Head; and we may be compared to the New River Company. The labours of others have raised for us an immense reservoir of important facts. We merely lay them on, and communicate them, in a clear and gentle stream, through the medium of these numbers, to a world thirsting for *Pickwickian* knowledge.

Acting in this spirit, and resolutely proceeding on our determination to avow our obligations to the authorities we have consulted, we frankly say, that to the note-book of Mr. Snodgrass are we indebted for the particulars recorded in this, and the succeeding chapter—particulars which, now that we have disburdened our conscience, we shall proceed to detail without further comment.

The whole population of Rochester and the adjoining towns rose from their beds at an early hour of the following morning, in a state of the utmost bustle and excitement. A grand review was to take place upon the Lines. The manœuvres of half-a-dozen regiments were to be inspected by the eagle eye of the commander-in-chief; temporary fortifications had been erected, the citadel was to be attacked and taken, and a mine was to be sprung.

Mr. Pickwick was, as our readers may have gathered from the slight extract we gave from his description of Chatham, an enthusiastic admirer of the army. Nothing could have been more delightful to him—nothing could have harmonised so well with the peculiar feeling of each of his companions—as this sight. Accordingly they were soon a-foot, and walking in the direction of the scene of action, towards which crowds of people were already pouring from a variety of quarters.

The appearance of everything on the Lines denoted that the approaching ceremony was one of the utmost grandeur and importance. There were sentries posted to keep the ground for the troops, and servants on the batteries keeping places for the ladies, and sergeants running to and fro, with vellum-covered books under their arms, and Colonel Bulder, in full military uniform, on horseback, galloping first to one place and then to another, and backing his horse among the people, and prancing, and curvetting, and shouting in a most alarming manner, and making himself very hoarse in the voice, and very red in the face, without any assignable cause or reason whatever. Officers were running backwards and forwards, first communicating with Colonel Bulder, and then ordering the sergeants, and then running away altogether; and even the very privates themselves looked from behind their glazed stocks with an air of mysterious solemnity, which sufficiently bespoke the special nature of the occasion.

Mr. Pickwick and his three companions stationed themselves in the front rank of the crowd, and patiently awaited the commencement of the proceedings. The throng was increasing every moment; and the efforts they were compelled to make, to retain the position they had gained, sufficiently occupied their attention during the two hours that ensued. At one time there was a sudden pressure from behind; and then Mr. Pickwick was jerked forward for several yards, with a degree of speed and elasticity highly inconsistent with the general gravity of his demeanour; at another moment there was a request to “keep back” from the front, and then the butt-end of a musket was either dropped upon Mr. Pickwick’s toe, to remind him of the demand, or thrust into his chest, to ensure its being complied with. Then some facetious gentlemen on the left, after pressing sideways in a body, and squeezing Mr. Snodgrass into the very last extreme of human torture, would request

to know "vere he vos a shovin'to ;" and when Mr. Winkle had done expressing his excessive indignation at witnessing this unprovoked assault, some person behind would knock his hat over his eyes, and beg the favour of his putting his head in his pocket. These, and other practical witticisms, coupled with the unaccountable absence of Mr. Tupman (who had suddenly disappeared, and was nowhere to be found), rendered their situation upon the whole rather more uncomfortable than pleasing or desirable.

At length that low roar of many voices ran through the crowd, which usually announces the arrival of whatever they have been waiting for. All eyes were turned in the direction of the sally-port. A few moments of eager expectation, and colours were seen fluttering gaily in the air, arms glistened brightly in the sun, column after column poured on to the plain. The troops halted and formed ; the word of command rung through the line, there was a general clash of muskets as arms were presented ; and the commander-in-chief, attended by Colonel Bulder and numerous officers, cantered to the front. The military bands struck up all together ; the horses stood upon two legs each, cantered backwards, and whisked their tails about in all directions : the dogs barked, the mob screamed, the troops recovered, and nothing was to be seen on either side, as far as the eye could reach, but a long perspective of red coats and white trousers, fixed and motionless.

Mr. Pickwick had been so fully occupied in falling about, and disentangling himself, miraculously, from between the legs of horses, that he had not enjoyed sufficient leisure to observe the scene before him, until it assumed the appearance we have just described. When he was at last enabled to stand firmly on his legs, his gratification and delight were unbounded.

"Can anything be finer or more delightful ?" he inquired of Mr. Winkle.

"Nothing," replied that gentleman, who had had a short man standing on each of his feet for the quarter of an hour immediately preceding.

"It is indeed a noble and a brilliant sight," said Mr. Snodgrass, in whose bosom a blaze of poetry was rapidly bursting forth, "to see the gallant defenders of their country drawn up in brilliant array before its peaceful citizens ; their faces beaming—not with warlike ferocity, but with civilised gentleness ; their eyes flashing—not with the rude fire of rapine

or revenge, but with the soft light of humanity and intelligence."

Mr. Pickwick fully entered into the spirit of this eulogium, but he could not exactly re-echo its terms; for the soft light of intelligence burnt rather feebly in the eyes of the warriors, inasmuch as the command "eyes front" had been given, and all the spectator saw before him was several thousand pairs of optics, staring straight forward, wholly divested of any expression whatever.

"We are in a capital situation now," said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him. The crowd had gradually dispersed in their immediate vicinity, and they were nearly alone.

"Capital!" echoed both Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle.

"What are they doing now?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, adjusting his spectacles.

"I—I—rather think," said Mr. Winkle, changing colour—"I rather think they're going to fire."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

"I—I—really think they are," urged Mr. Snodgrass, somewhat alarmed.

"Impossible," replied Mr. Pickwick. He had hardly uttered the word, when the whole half-dozen regiments levelled their muskets as if they had but one common object, and that object the Pickwickians, and burst forth with the most awful and tremendous discharge that ever shook the earth to its centre, or an elderly gentleman off his.

It was in this trying situation, exposed to a galling fire of blank cartridges, and harassed by the operations of the military, a fresh body of whom had begun to fall in on the opposite side, that Mr. Pickwick displayed that perfect coolness and self-possession, which are the indispensable accompaniments of a great mind. He seized Mr. Winkle by the arm, and placing himself between that gentleman and Mr. Snodgrass, earnestly besought them to remember that beyond the possibility of being rendered deaf by the noise, there was no immediate danger to be apprehended from the firing.

"But—but—suppose some of the men should happen to have ball cartridges by mistake," remonstrated Mr. Winkle, pallid at the supposition he was himself conjuring up. "I heard something whistle through the air just now—so sharp; close to my ear."

"We had better throw ourselves on our faces, hadn't we?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"No, no—it's over now," said Mr. Pickwick. His lip might quiver, and his cheek might blanch, but no expression of fear or concern escaped the lips of that immortal man.

Mr. Pickwick was right: the firing ceased; but he had scarcely time to congratulate himself on the accuracy of his opinion, when a quick movement was visible in the line: the hoarse shout of the word of command ran along it, and before either of the party could form a guess at the meaning of this new manœuvre, the whole of the half-dozen regiments, with fixed bayonets, charged at double quick time down upon the very spot on which Mr. Pickwick and his friends were stationed.

Man is but mortal: and there is a point beyond which human courage cannot extend. Mr. Pickwick gazed through his spectacles for an instant on the advancing mass, and then fairly turned his back and—we will not say fled; firstly, because it is an ignoble term, and, secondly, because Mr. Pickwick's figure was by no means adapted for that mode of retreat—he trotted away, at as quick a rate as his legs would convey him; so quickly, indeed, that he did not perceive the awkwardness of his situation, to the full extent, until too late.

The opposite troops, whose falling-in had perplexed Mr. Pickwick a few seconds before, were drawn up to repel the mimic attack of the sham besiegers of the citadel; and the consequence was that Mr. Pickwick and his two companions found themselves suddenly inclosed between two lines of great length, the one advancing at a rapid pace, and the other firmly waiting the collision in hostile array.

"Hoi!" shouted the officers of the advancing line.

"Get out of the way!" cried the officers of the stationary one.

"Where are we to go to?" screamed the agitated Pickwickians.

"Hoi—hoi—hoi!" was the only reply. There was a moment of intense bewilderment, a heavy tramp of footsteps, a violent concussion, a smothered laugh; the half-dozen regiments were half a thousand yards off, and the soles of Mr. Pickwick's boots were elevated in air.

Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle had each performed a compulsory somerset with remarkable agility, when the first object that met the eyes of the latter as he sat on the ground, staunching with a yellow silk handkerchief the stream of life which issued from his nose, was his venerated leader at some

distance off, running after his own hat, which was gamboling playfully away in perspective.

There are very few moments in a man's existence when he experiences so much ludicrous distress, or meets with so little charitable commiseration, as when he is in pursuit of his own hat. A vast deal of coolness, and a peculiar degree of judgment, are requisite in catching a hat. A man must not be precipitate, or he runs over it; he must not rush into the opposite extreme, or he loses it altogether. The best way is, to keep gently up with the object of pursuit, to be wary and cautious, to watch your opportunity well, get gradually before it, then make a rapid dive, seize it by the crown, and stick it firmly on your head: smiling pleasantly all the time, as if you thought it as good a joke as anybody else.

There was a fine gentle wind, and Mr. Pickwick's hat rolled sportively before it. The wind puffed, and Mr. Pickwick puffed, and the hat rolled over and over as merrily as a lively porpoise in a strong tide; and on it might have rolled, far beyond Mr. Pickwick's reach, had not its course been providentially stopped, just as that gentleman was on the point of resigning it to its fate.

Mr. Pickwick, we say, was completely exhausted, and about to give up the chase, when the hat was blown with some violence against the wheel of a carriage, which was drawn up in a line with half-a-dozen other vehicles on the spot to which his steps had been directed. Mr. Pickwick, perceiving his advantage, darted briskly forward, secured his property, planted it on his head, and paused to take breath. He had not been stationary half a minute, when he heard his own name eagerly pronounced by a voice, which he at once recognised as Mr. Tupman's, and, looking upwards, he beheld a sight which filled him with surprise and pleasure.

In an open barouche, the horses of which had been taken out, the better to accommodate it to the crowded place, stood a stout old gentleman, in a blue coat and bright buttons, corduroy breeches and top-boots, two young ladies in scarfs and feathers, a young gentleman apparently enamoured of one of the young ladies in scarfs and feathers, a lady of doubtful age, probably the aunt of the aforesaid, and Mr. Tupman, as easy and unconcerned as if he had belonged to the family from the first moments of his infancy. Fastened up behind the barouche was a hamper of spacious dimensions — one of those hampers which always awakens in a contempla-

tive mind associations connected with cold fowls, tongues, and bottles of wine—and on the box sat a fat and red-faced boy, in a state of somnolency, whom no speculative observer could have regarded for an instant without setting down as the official dispenser of the contents of the before-mentioned hamper, when the proper time for their consumption should arrive.

Mr. Pickwick had bestowed a hasty glance on these interesting objects, when he was again greeted by his faithful disciple.

"Pickwick—Pickwick," said Mr. Tupman: "come up here. Make haste."

"Come along, sir. Pray, come up," said the stout gentleman. "Joe!—damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again.—Joe, let down the steps." The fat boy rolled slowly off the box, let down the steps, and held the carriage door invitingly open. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle came up at the moment.

"Room for you all, gentlemen," said the stout man. "Two inside, and one out. Joe, make room for one of these gentlemen on the box. Now, sir, come along;" and the stout gentleman extended his arm, and pulled first Mr. Pickwick, and then Mr. Snodgrass, into the barouche by main force. Mr. Winkle mounted to the box, the fat boy waddled to the same porch, and fell fast asleep instantly.

"Well, gentlemen," said the stout man, "very glad to see you. Know you very well, gentlemen, though you mayn't remember me. I spent some ev'nins at your club last winter—picked up my friend Mr. Tupman here this morning, and very glad I was to see him. Well, sir, and how are you? You do look uncommon well, to be sure."

Mr. Pickwick acknowledged the compliment, and cordially shook hands with the stout gentleman in the top boots.

"Well, and how are you, sir?" said the stout gentleman, addressing Mr. Snodgrass with paternal anxiety. "Charming, eh? Well, that's right—that's right. And how are you, sir (to Mr. Winkle)? Well, I am glad to hear you say you are well; very glad I am, to be sure. My daughters, gentlemen—my gals these are; and that's my sister, Miss Rachael Wardle. She's a Miss, she is; and yet she an't a Miss—eh, sir, eh?" And the stout gentleman playfully inserted his elbow between the ribs of Mr. Pickwick, and laughed very heartily.



MR. PICKWICK IN CHASE OF HIS HAT

"Lor, brother!" said Miss Wardle, with a deprecating smile.

"True, true," said the stout gentleman; "no one can deny it. Gentlemen, I beg your pardon; this is my friend Mr. Trundle. And now you all know each other, let's be comfortable and happy, and see what's going forward; that's what I say." So the stout gentleman put on his spectacles, and Mr. Pickwick pulled out his glass, and everybody stood up in the carriage, and looked over somebody else's shoulder at the evolutions of the militia.

Astounding evolutions they were, one rank firing over the heads of another rank, and then running away; and then the other rank firing over the heads of another rank, and running away in their turn; and then forming squares, with officers in the centre; and then descending the trench on one side with scaling ladders, and ascending it on the other again by the same means; and knocking down barricades of baskets, and behaving in the most gallant manner possible. Then there was such a ramming down of the contents of enormous guns on the battery, with instruments like magnified mops; such a preparation before they were let off, and such an awful noise when they did go, that the air resounded with the screams of ladies. The young Miss Wardles were so frightened, that Mr. Trundle was actually obliged to hold one of them up in the carriage, while Mr. Snodgrass supported the other, and Mr. Wardle's sister suffered under such a dreadful state of nervous alarm, that Mr. Tupman found it indispensably necessary to put his arm round her waist, to keep her up at all. Everybody was excited, except the fat boy, and he slept as soundly as if the roaring of cannon were his ordinary lullaby.

"Joe, Joe!" said the stout gentleman, when the citadel was taken, and the besiegers and besieged sat down to dinner. "Damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again. Be good enough to pinch him, sir—in the leg, if you please; nothing else wakes him—thank you. Undo the hamper, Joe."

The fat boy, who had been effectually roused by the compression of a portion of his leg between the finger and thumb of Mr. Winkle, rolled off the box once again, and proceeded to unpack the hamper, with more expedition than could have been expected from his previous inactivity.

"Now, we must sit close," said the stout gentleman. After a great many jokes about squeezing the ladies' sleeves,

and a vast quantity of blushing at sundry jocose proposals, that the ladies should sit in the gentlemen's laps, the whole party were stowed down in the barouche; and the stout gentleman proceeded to hand the things from the fat boy (who had mounted up behind for the purpose) into the carriage.

"Now, Joe, knives and forks." The knives and forks were handed in, and the ladies and gentlemen inside, and Mr. Winkle on the box, were each furnished with those useful instruments.

"Plates, Joe, plates." A similar process employed in the distribution of the crockery.

"Now, Joe, the fowls." Damn that boy; he's gone to sleep again. Joe! Joe!" (Sundry taps on the head with a stick, and the fat boy, with some difficulty, roused from his lethargy.) "Come, hand in the eatables."

There was something in the sound of the last word which roused the unctuous boy. He jumped up: and the leaden eyes, which twinkled behind his mountainous cheeks, leered horribly upon the food as he unpacked it from the basket.

"Now make haste," said Mr. Wardle; for the fat boy was hanging fondly over a capon, which he seemed wholly unable to part with. The boy sighed deeply, and, bestowing an ardent gaze upon its plumpness, unwillingly consigned it to his master.

"That's right—look sharp. Now the tongue—now the pigeon-pie. Take care of that veal and ham—mind the lobsters—take the salad out of the cloth—give me the dressing." Such were the hurried orders which issued from the lips of Mr. Wardle, as he handed in the different articles described, and placed dishes in everybody's hands, and on everybody's knees, in endless number.

"Now an't this capital?" inquired that jolly personage, when the work of destruction had commenced.

"Capital!" said Mr. Winkle, who was carving a fowl on the box.

"Glass of wine?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

"You'd better have a bottle to yourself, up there, hadn't you?"

"You're very good."

"Joe!"

"Yes, sir." (He wasn't asleep this time, having just succeeded in abstracting a veal patty.)

"Bottle of wine to the gentleman on the box. Glad to see you, sir."

"Thankee." Mr. Winkle emptied his glass, and placed the bottle on the coach-box, by his side.

"Will you permit me to have the pleasure, sir?" said Mr. Trundle to Mr. Winkle.

"With great pleasure," replied Mr. Winkle to Mr. Trundle; and then the two gentlemen took wine, after which they took a glass of wine round, ladies and all.

"How dear Emily is flirting with the stranger gentleman," whispered the spinster aunt with true spinster-aunt-like envy, to her brother Mr. Wardle.

"Oh! I don't know," said the jolly old gentleman; "all very natural, I dare say—noting unusual. Mr. Pickwick, some wine, sir?" Mr. Pickwick, who had been deeply investigating the interior of the pigeon-pie, readily assented.

"Emily, my dear," said the spinster aunt, with a patronising air, "don't talk so loud, love."

"Lor, aunt!"

"Aunt and the little old gentleman want to have it all to themselves, I think," whispered Miss Isabella Wardle to her sister Emily. The young ladies laughed very heartily, and the old one tried to look amiable, but couldn't manage it.

"Young girls have *such* spirits," said Miss Wardle to Mr. Tupman, with an air of gentle commiseration, as if animal spirits were contraband, and their possession without a permit, a high crime and misdemeanour.

"Oh, they have," replied Mr. Tupman, not exactly making the sort of reply that was expected from him. "It's quite delightful."

"Hem!" said Miss Wardle, rather dubiously.

"Will you permit me," said Mr. Tupman, in his blandest manner, touching the enchanting Rachael's wrist with one hand, and gently elevating the bottle with the other. "Will you permit me?"

"Oh, sir!" Mr. Tupman looked most impressive; and Rachael expressed her fear that more guns were going off, in which case, of course, she would have required support again.

"Do you think my dear nieces pretty?" whispered their affectionate aunt to Mr. Tupman.

"I should, if their aunt wasn't here," replied the ready Pickwickian, with a passionate glance.

"Oh, you naughty man—but really, if their complexions were a little *little* better, don't you think they would be nice-looking girls—by candle-light?"

"Yes; I think they would;" said Mr. Tupman, with an air of indifference.

"Oh, you quiz—I know what you were going to say."

"What?" inquired Mr. Tupman, who had not precisely made up his mind to say anything at all.

"You were going to say, that Isabel stoops—I know you were—you men are such observers. Well, so she does; it can't be denied; and, certainly, if there is one thing more than another that makes a girl look ugly, it is stooping. I often tell her, that when she gets a little older, she'll be quite frightful. Well, you *are* a quiz!"

Mr. Tupman had no objection to earning the reputation at so cheap a rate: so he looked very knowing, and smiled mysteriously.

"What a sarcastic smile," said the admiring Rachael: "I declare I'm quite afraid of you."

"Afraid of me!"

"Oh, you can't disguise anything from me—I know what that smile means, very well."

"What?" said Mr. Tupman, who had not the slightest notion himself.

"You mean," said the amiable aunt, sinking her voice still lower—"You mean, that you don't think Isabella's stooping is as bad as Emily's boldness. Well, she *is* bold! You cannot think how wretched it makes me sometimes. I'm sure I cry about it for hours together—my dear brother is so good, and so unsuspecting, that he never sees it; if he did, I'm quite certain it would break his heart. I wish I could think it was only manner—I hope it may be—" (here the affectionate relative heaved a deep sigh, and shook her head despondingly.)

"I'm sure aunt's talking about us," whispered Miss Emily Wardle to her sister—"I'm quite certain of it—she looks so malicious."

"Is she?" replied Isabella—"Hem! aunt dear!"

"Yes, my dear love!"

"I'm so afraid you'll catch cold, aunt—have a silk hand-

kerchief to tie round your dear old head—you really should take care of yourself—consider your age !”

However well deserved this piece of retaliation might have been, it was as vindictive a one as could well have been resorted to. There is no guessing in what form of reply the aunt's indignation would have vented itself, had not Mr. Wardle unconsciously changed the subject, by calling emphatically for Joe.

“Damn that boy,” said the old gentleman, “he's gone to sleep again.”

“Very extraordinary boy, that,” said Mr. Pickwick, “does he always sleep in this way !”

“Sleep !” said the old gentleman, “he's always asleep. Goes on errands fast asleep, and snores as he waits at table.”

“How very odd !” said Mr. Pickwick.

“Ah ! odd indeed,” returned the old gentleman ; “I'm proud of that boy—wouldn't part with him on any account—he's a natural curiosity ! Here, Joe—Joe—take these things away, and open another bottle—d'ye hear ?”

The fat boy rose, opened his eyes, swallowed the huge piece of pie he had been in the act of masticating when he last fell asleep, and slowly obeyed his master's orders—gloating languidly over the remains of the feast, as he removed the plates, and deposited them in the hamper. The fresh bottle was produced, and speedily emptied : the hamper was made fast in its old place—the fat boy once more mounted the box—the spectacles and pocket-glass were again adjusted and the evolutions of the military recommenced. There was a great fizzing and banging of guns, and starting of ladies—and then a mine was sprung, to the gratification of everybody—and when the mine had gone off, the military and the company followed its example, and went off too.

“Now, mind,” said the old gentleman, as he shook hands with Mr. Pickwick at the conclusion of a conversation which had been carried on at intervals, during the conclusion of the proceedings—“we shall see you all to-morrow.”

“Most certainly,” replied Mr. Pickwick.

“You have got the address.”

“Manor Farm, Dingley Dell,” said Mr. Pickwick, consulting his pocket-book.

“That's it,” said the old gentleman. “I don't let you off, mind, under a week ; and undertake that you shall see

everything worth seeing. If you've come down for a country life, come to me, and I'll give you plenty of it. Joe—damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again—Joe, help Tom put in the horses.”

The horses were put in—the driver mounted—the fat boy clambered up by his side—farewells were exchanged—and the carriage rattled off. As the Pickwickians turned round to take a last glimpse of it, the setting sun cast a rich glow on the faces of their entertainers, and fell upon the form of the fat boy. His head was sunk upon his bosom; and he slumbered again.

CHAPTER V

SHOWING, AMONG OTHER MATTERS, HOW MR. PICKWICK
UNDERTOOK TO DRIVE, AND MR. WINKLE TO RIDE;
AND HOW THEY BOTH DID IT

ON returning next morning from an early stroll by the river, Mr. Pickwick found that his three companions had risen, and were waiting his arrival to commence breakfast, which was ready laid in tempting display. They sat down to the meal; and broiled ham, eggs, tea, coffee, and sundries, began to disappear with a rapidity which at once bore testimony to the excellence of the fare, and the appetites of its consumers.

"Now, about Manor Farm," said Mr. Pickwick. "How shall we go?"

"We had better consult the waiter, perhaps," said Mr. Tupman, and the waiter was summoned accordingly.

"Dingley Dell, gentlemen—fifteen miles, gentlemen—cross road—post-chaise, sir?"

"Post-chaise won't hold more than two," said Mr. Pickwick.

"True, sir—beg your pardon, sir.—Very nice four-wheeled chaise, sir—seat for two behind—one in front for the gentleman that drives—oh! beg your pardon, sir—that'll only hold three."

"What's to be done?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Perhaps one of the gentlemen would like to ride, sir?" suggested the waiter, looking towards Mr. Winkle; "very good saddle horses, sir—any of Mr. Wardle's men coming to Rochester bring 'em back, sir."

"The very thing," said Mr. Pickwick. "Winkle, will you go on horseback?"

Mr. Winkle did entertain considerable misgivings in the very lowest recesses of his own heart, relative to his equestrian skill; but, as he would not have them even suspected on any account, he at once replied with great hardihood, "Certainly. I should enjoy it, of all things."

Mr. Winkle had rushed upon his fate; there was no

resource. "Let them be at the door by eleven," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very well, sir," replied the waiter.

The waiter retired; the breakfast concluded; and the travellers ascended to their respective bed-rooms, to prepare a change of clothing, to take with them on their approaching expedition.

Mr. Pickwick had made his preliminary arrangements, and was looking over the coffee-room blinds at the passengers in the street, when the waiter entered, and announced that the chaise was ready—an announcement which the vehicle itself confirmed, by forthwith appearing before the coffee-room blinds aforesaid.

It was a curious little green box on four wheels, with a low place like a wine-bin for two behind, and an elevated perch for one in front, drawn by an immense brown horse, displaying great symmetry of bone. An hostler stood near, holding by the bridle another immense horse—apparently a near relative of the animal in the chaise—ready saddled for Mr. Winkle.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Pickwick, as they stood upon the pavement while the coats were being put in. "Bless my soul! who's to drive? I never thought of that."

"Oh! you, of course," said Mr. Tupman.

"Of course," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"I!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Not the slightest fear, sir," interposed the hostler. "Warrant him quiet, sir; a hinfant in arms might drive him."

"He don't shy, does he?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Shy, sir?—He wouldn't shy if he was to meet a vaggin-load of monkeys with their tails burnt off."

The last recommendation was indisputable. Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass got into the bin; Mr. Pickwick ascended to his perch, and deposited his feet on a floor-clothed shelf, erected beneath it for that purpose.

"Now, shiny Villiam," said the hostler to the deputy hostler, "give the gen'lm'n the ribbins." "Shiny Villiam"—so called, probably, from his sleek hair and oily countenance—placed the reins in Mr. Pickwick's left hand; and the upper hostler thrust a whip into his right.

"Wo—o!" cried Mr. Pickwick, as the tall quadruped evinced a decided inclination to back into the coffee-room window.

"Wo—o!" echoed Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass, from the bin.

"Only his playfulness, gen'l'm'n," said the head hostler encouragingly; "jist kitch hold on him, Villiam." The deputy restrained the animal's impetuosity, and the principal ran to assist Mr. Winkle in mounting.

"T'other side, sir, if you please."

"Blow'd if the gen'l'm'n worn't a gettin' up on the wrong side," whispered a grinning post-boy to the inexpressibly gratified waiter.

Mr. Winkle, thus instructed, climbed into his saddle, with about as much difficulty as he would have experienced in getting up the side of a first-rate man-of-war.

"All right?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, with an inward presentiment that it was all wrong.

"All right," replied Mr. Winkle faintly.

"Let 'em go," cried the hostler,—"*Hold him in, sir,*" and away went the chaise and the saddle-horse, with Mr. Pickwick on the box of the one, and Mr. Winkle on the back of the other, to the delight and gratification of the whole inn yard.

"What makes him go sideways?" said Mr. Snodgrass in the bin, to Mr. Winkle in the saddle.

"I can't imagine," replied Mr. Winkle. His horse was drifting up the street in the most mysterious manner—side first, with his head towards one side of the way, and his tail towards the other.

Mr. Pickwick had no leisure to observe either this or any other particular, the whole of his faculties being concentrated in the management of the animal attached to the chaise, who displayed various peculiarities, highly interesting to a bystander, but by no means equally amusing to any one seated behind him. Besides constantly jerking his head up, in a very unpleasant and uncomfortable manner, and tugging at the reins to an extent which rendered it a matter of great difficulty for Mr. Pickwick to hold them, he had a singular propensity for darting suddenly every now and then to the side of the road, then stopping short, and then rushing forward for some minutes, at a speed which it was wholly impossible to control.

"What *can* he mean by this?" said Mr. Snodgrass, when the horse had executed this manœuvre for the twentieth time.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Tupman; "it *looks* very like shying, don't it?" Mr. Snodgrass was about to reply, when he was interrupted by a shout from Mr. Pickwick.

"Woo!" said that gentleman; "I have dropped my whip."

"Winkle," said Mr. Snodgrass, as the equestrian came trotting up on the tall horse, with his hat over his ears, and shaking all over, as if he would shake to pieces, with the violence of the exercise, "pick up the whip, there's a good fellow." Mr. Winkle pulled at the bridle of the tall horse till he was black in the face; and having at length succeeded in stopping him, dismounted, handed the whip to Mr. Pickwick, and grasping the reins, prepared to remount.

Now whether the tall horse, in the natural playfulness of his disposition, was desirous of having a little innocent recreation with Mr. Winkle, or whether it occurred to him that he could perform the journey as much to his own satisfaction without a rider as with one, are points upon which, of course, we can arrive at no definite and distinct conclusion. By whatever motives the animal was actuated, certain it is that Mr. Winkle had no sooner touched the reins, than he slipped them over his head, and darted backwards to their full length.

"Poor fellow," said Mr. Winkle, soothingly,—"*poor fellow—good old horse.*" The "*poor fellow*" was proof against flattery: the more Mr. Winkle tried to get nearer him, the more he sidled away; and, notwithstanding all kinds of coaxing and wheedling, there were Mr. Winkle and the horse going round and round each other for ten minutes, at the end of which time each was at precisely the same distance from the other as when they first commenced—an unsatisfactory sort of thing under any circumstances, but particularly so in a lonely road, where no assistance can be procured.

"What am I to do?" shouted Mr. Winkle, after the dodging had been prolonged for a considerable time. "What am I to do? I can't get on him."

"You had better lead him till we come to a turnpike," replied Mr. Pickwick from the chaise.

"But he won't come!" roared Mr. Winkle. "Do come, and hold him."

Mr. Pickwick was the very personation of kindness and humanity: he threw the reins on the horse's back, and having descended from his seat, carefully drew the chaise into the hedge, lest anything should come along the road, and stepped



WINKLE SOOTHES THE RETRACTORY MARE

back to the assistance of his distressed companion, leaving Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the vehicle.

The horse no sooner beheld Mr. Pickwick advancing towards him with the chaise whip in his hand, than he exchanged the rotary motion in which he had previously indulged, for a retrograde movement of so very determined a character, that it at once drew Mr. Winkle, who was still at the end of the bridle, at a rather quicker rate than fast walking, in the direction from which they had just come. Mr. Pickwick ran to his assistance, but the faster Mr. Pickwick ran forward, the faster the horse ran backward. There was a great scraping of feet, and kicking up of the dust; and at last Mr. Winkle, his arms being nearly pulled out of their sockets, fairly let go his hold. The horse paused, stared, shook his head, turned round, and quietly trotted home to Rochester, leaving Mr. Winkle and Mr. Pickwick gazing on each other with countenances of blank dismay. A rattling noise at a little distance attracted their attention. They looked up.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the agonized Mr. Pickwick, "there's the other horse running away!"

It was but too true. The animal was startled by the noise, and the reins were on his back. The result may be guessed. He tore off with the four-wheeled chaise behind him, and Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the four-wheeled chaise. The heat was a short one. Mr. Tupman threw himself into the hedge, Mr. Snodgrass followed his example, the horse dashed the four-wheeled chaise against a wooden bridge, separated the wheels from the body, and the bin from the perch: and finally stood stock still to gaze upon the ruin he had made.

The first care of the two unpilt friends was to extricate their unfortunate companions from their bed of quickset—a process which gave them the unspeakable satisfaction of discovering that they had sustained no injury, beyond sundry rents in their garments, and various lacerations from the brambles. The next thing to be done was, to unharness the horse. This complicated process having been effected, the party walked slowly forward, leading the horse among them, and abandoning the chaise to its fate.

An hour's walking brought the travellers to a little roadside public-house, with two elm trees, a horse trough, and a sign-post, in front; one or two deformed hay-ricks behind, a kitchen garden at the side, and rotten sheds and moulder-

ing out-houses jumbled in strange confusion all about it. A red-headed man was working in the garden; and to him Mr. Pickwick called lustily—"Hallo there!"

The red-headed man raised his body, shaded his eyes with his hand, and stared, long and coolly, at Mr. Pickwick and his companions.

"Hallo there!" repeated Mr. Pickwick.

"Hallo!" was the red-headed man's reply.

"How far is it to Dingley Dell?"

"Better er seven mile."

"Is it a good road?"

"No t'ant." Having uttered this brief reply, and apparently satisfied himself with another scrutiny, the red-headed man resumed his work.

"We want to put this horse up here," said Mr. Pickwick; "I suppose we can, can't we?"

"Want to put that ere horse up, do ee?" repeated the red-headed man, leaning on his spade.

"Of course," replied Mr. Pickwick, who had by this time advanced, horse in hand, to the garden rails.

"Missus"—roared the man with the red head, emerging from the garden, and looking very hard at the horse—"Missus!"

A tall bony woman—straight all the way down—in a coarse blue pelisse, with the waist an inch or two below her arm-pits, responded to the call.

"Can we put this horse up here, my good woman?" said Mr. Tupman, advancing, and speaking in his most seductive tones. The woman looked very hard at the whole party; and the red-headed man whispered something in her ear.

"No," replied the woman, after a little consideration, "I'm afeerd on it."

"Afraid!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, "what's the woman afraid of?"

"It got us in trouble last time," said the woman, turning into the house; "I woant have nothin' to say to 'un."

"Most extraordinary thing I ever met with in my life," said the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

"I—I—really believe," whispered Mr. Winkle, as his friends gathered round him, "that they think we have come by this horse in some dishonest manner."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, in a storm of indignation. Mr. Winkle modestly repeated his suggestion.

"Hallo, you fellow!" said the angry Mr. Pickwick, "do you think we stole this horse?"

"I'm sure ye did," replied the red-headed man, with a grin which agitated his countenance from one auricular organ to the other. Saying which, he turned into the house, and banged the door after him.

"It's like a dream," ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, "a hideous dream. The idea of a man's walking about, all day, with a dreadful horse that he can't get rid of!" The depressed Pickwickians turned moodily away, with the tall quadruped, for which they all felt the most unmitigated disgust, following slowly at their heels.

It was late in the afternoon when the four friends and their four-footed companion turned into the lane leading to Manor Farm: and even when they were so near their place of destination, the pleasure they would otherwise have experienced was materially damped as they reflected on the singularity of their appearance, and the absurdity of their situation. Torn clothes, lacerated faces, dusty shoes, exhausted looks, and, above all, the horse. Oh, how Mr. Pickwick cursed that horse: he had eyed the noble animal from time to time with looks expressive of hatred and revenge; more than once he had calculated the probable amount of the expense he would incur by cutting his throat; and now the temptation to destroy him, or to cast him loose upon the world, rushed upon his mind with tenfold force. He was roused from a meditation on these dire imaginings, by the sudden appearance of two figures at a turn of the lane. It was Mr. Wardle, and his faithful attendant, the fat boy.

"Why, where *have* you been?" said the hospitable old gentleman; "I've been waiting for you all day. Well, you *do* look tired. What! Scratches! Not hurt, I hope—eh? Well, I *am* glad to hear that—very. So you've been spilt, eh? Never mind. Common accident in these parts. Joe—he's asleep again!—Joe, take that horse from the gentleman, and lead it into the stable."

The fat boy sauntered heavily behind them with the animal; and the old gentleman, condoling with his guests in homely phrase on so much of the day's adventures as they thought proper to communicate, led the way to the kitchen.

"We'll have you put to rights here," said the old gentleman, "and then I'll introduce you to the people in the parlour. Emma, bring out the cherry brandy; now, Jane,

a needle and thread here ; towels and water, Mary. • Come, girls, bustle about."

Three or four buxom girls speedily dispersed in search of the different articles in requisition, while a couple of large-headed, circular-visaged males rose from their seats in the chimney-corner (for although it was a May evening, their attachment to the wood fire appeared as cordial as if it were Christmas), and dived into some obscure recesses, from which they speedily produced a bottle of blacking, and some half-dozen brushes.

"Bustle!" said the old gentleman again, but the admonition was quite unnecessary, for one of the girls poured out the cherry brandy, and another brought in the towels, and one of the men suddenly seizing Mr. Pickwick by the leg, at imminent hazard of throwing him off his balance, brushed away at his boot, till his corns were red-hot ; while the other shampoo'd Mr. Winkle with a heavy clothes-brush, indulging, during the operation, in that hissing sound which hostlers are wont to produce when engaged in rubbing down a horse.

Mr. Snodgrass, having concluded his ablutions, took a survey of the room, while standing with his back to the fire, sipping his cherry brandy with heartfelt satisfaction. He describes it as a large apartment, with a red brick floor and a capacious chimney ; the ceiling garnished with hams, sides of bacon, and ropes of onions. The walls were decorated with several hunting-whips, two or three bridles, a saddle and an old rusty blunderbuss, with an inscription below it, intimating that it was "Loaded"—as it had been, on the same authority, for half a century at least. An old eight-day clock, of solemn and sedate demeanour, ticked gravely in one corner ; and a silver watch, of equal antiquity, dangled from one of the many hooks which ornamented the dresser.

"Ready?" said the old gentleman inquiringly, when his guests had been washed, mended, brushed, and brandied.

"Quite," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Come along, then," and the party having traversed several dark passages, and being joined by Mr. Tupman, who had lingered behind to snatch a kiss from Emma, for which he had been duly rewarded with sundry pushings and scratchings, arrived at the parlour door.

"Welcome," said their hospitable host, throwing it open and stepping forward to announce them, "Welcome, gentlemen, to Manor Farm."

CHAPTER VI

AN OLD-FASHIONED CARD-PARTY. THE CLERGYMAN'S VERSES

SEVERAL guests who were assembled in the old parlour rose to greet Mr. Pickwick and his friends upon their entrance; and during the performance of the ceremony of introduction, with all due formalities, Mr. Pickwick had leisure to observe the appearance, and speculate upon the characters and pursuits, of the persons by whom he was surrounded—a habit in which he in common with many other great men delighted to indulge.

A very old lady, in a lofty cap and faded silk gown—no less a personage than Mr. Wardle's mother—occupied the post of honour on the right-hand corner of the chimney-piece; and various certificates of her having been brought up in the way she should go when young, and of her not having departed from it when old, ornamented the walls, in the form of samplers of ancient date, worsted landscapes of equal antiquity, and crimson silk tea-kettle holders of a more modern period. The aunt, the two young ladies, and Mr. Wardle, each vying with the other in paying zealous and unremitting attentions to the old lady, crowded round her easy-chair, one holding her ear-trumpet, another an orange, and a third a smelling-bottle, while a fourth was busily engaged in patting and punching the pillows which were arranged for her support. On the opposite side sat a bald-headed old gentleman, with a good-humoured benevolent face—the clergyman of Dingley Dell; and next him sat his wife, a stout blooming old lady, who looked as if she were well skilled, not only in the art and mystery of manufacturing home-made cordials greatly to other people's satisfaction, but of tasting them occasionally very much to her own. A little hard-headed, Ribston-pippin-faced man,

was conversing with a fat old gentleman in one corner ; and two or three more old gentlemen, and two or three more old ladies, sat bolt upright and motionless on their chairs, staring very hard at Mr. Pickwick and his fellow-voyagers.

"Mr. Pickwick, mother," said Mr. Wardle, at the very top of his voice.

"Ah!" said the old lady, shaking her head; "I can't hear you."

"Mr. Pickwick, grandma!" screamed both the young ladies together.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old lady. "Well; it don't much matter. He don't care for an old 'ooman like me, I dare say."

"I assure you, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, grasping the old lady's hand, and speaking so loud that the exertion imparted a crimson hue to his benevolent countenance, "I assure you, ma'am, that nothing delights me more than to see a lady of your time of life heading so fine a family, and looking so young and well."

"Ah!" said the old lady, after a short pause; "it's all very fine, I dare say; but I can't hear him."

"Grandma's rather put out now," said Miss Isabella Wardle, in a low tone; "but she'll talk to you presently."

Mr. Pickwick nodded his readiness to humour the infirmities of age, and entered into a general conversation with the other members of the circle.

"Delightful situation this," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Delightful!" echoed Messrs. Snodgrass, Tupman, and Winkle.

"Well, I think it is," said Mr. Wardle.

"There an't a better spot o' ground in all Kent, sir," said the hard-headed man with the pippin-face; "there an't indeed, sir—I'm sure there an't, sir." The hard-headed man looked triumphantly round, as if he had been very much contradicted by somebody, but had got the better of him at last.

"There an't a better spot o' ground in all Kent," said the hard-headed man again, after a pause.

"'Cept Mullins's Meadows," observed the fat man solemnly.

"Mullins's Meadows!" ejaculated the other, with profound contempt.

"Ah, Mullins's Meadows," repeated the fat man.

"Reg'lar good land that," interposed another fat man.

"And so it is, sure-ly," said a third fat man.

"Everybody knows that," said the corpulent host.

The hard-headed man looked dubiously round, but finding himself in a minority, assumed a compassionate air, and said no more.

"What are they talking about?" inquired the old lady of one of her grand-daughters, in a very audible voice; for, like many deaf people, she never seemed to calculate on the possibility of other persons hearing what she said herself.

"About the land, grandma."

"What about the land?—Nothing the matter, is there?"

"No, no. Mr. Miller was saying our land was better than Mullins's Meadows."

"How should he know anything about it?" inquired the old lady indignantly. "Miller's a conceited coxcomb, and you may tell him I said so." Saying which, the old lady, quite unconscious that she had spoken above a whisper, drew herself up, and looked carving-knives at the hard-headed delinquent.

"Come, come," said the bustling host, with a natural anxiety to change the conversation,— "What say you to a rubber, Mr. Pickwick?"

"I should like it of all things," replied that gentleman; "but pray don't make up one on my account."

"Oh, I assure you, mother's very fond of a rubber," said Mr. Wardle; "a'nt you, mother?"

The old lady, who was much less deaf on this subject than on any other, replied in the affirmative.

"Joe, Joe!" said the old gentleman; "Joe—damn that—oh, here he is; put out the card-tables."

The lethargic youth contrived without any additional rousing to set out two card-tables; the one for Pope Joan, and the other for whist. The whist-players were Mr. Pickwick and the old lady; Mr. Miller and the fat gentleman. The round game comprised the rest of the company.

The rubber was conducted with all that gravity of deportment and sedateness of demeanour which befit the pursuit entitled "whist"—a solemn observance, to which, as it appears to us, the title of "game" has been very irreverently and ignominiously applied. The round-game table, on the other hand, was so boisterously merry as materially to interrupt the contemplations of Mr. Miller, who, not being quite so much absorbed as he ought to have been, contrived

to commit various high crimes and misdemeanours, which excited the wrath of the fat gentleman to a very great extent, and called forth the good-humour of the old lady in a proportionate degree.

"There!" said the criminal Miller triumphantly, as he took up the odd trick at the conclusion of a hand; "that could not have been played better, I flatter myself;—impossible to have made another trick!"

"Miller ought to have trumped the diamond, oughtn't he, sir?" said the old lady.

Mr. Pickwick nodded assent.

"Ought I, though?" said the unfortunate, with a doubtful appeal to his partner.

"You ought, sir," said the fat gentleman, in an awful voice.

"Very sorry," said the crest-fallen Miller.

"Much use that," growled the fat gentleman.

"Two by honours makes us eight," said Mr. Pickwick.

Another hand. "Can you one?" inquired the old lady.

"I can," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Double, single, and the rub."

"Never was such luck," said Mr. Miller.

"Never was such cards," said the fat gentleman.

A solemn silence: Mr. Pickwick humorous, the old lady serious, the fat gentleman captious, and Mr. Miller timorous.

"Another double," said the old lady: triumphantly making a memorandum of the circumstance, by placing one sixpence and a battered half-penny under the candlestick.

"A double, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Quite aware of the fact, sir," replied the fat gentleman, sharply.

Another game, with a similar result, was followed by a revoke from the unlucky Miller; on which the fat gentleman burst into a state of high personal excitement which lasted until the conclusion of the game, when he retired into a corner, and remained perfectly mute for one hour and twenty-seven minutes; at the end of which time he emerged from his retirement, and offered Mr. Pickwick a pinch of snuff with the air of a man who had made up his mind to a Christian forgiveness of injuries sustained. The old lady's hearing decidedly improved, and the unlucky Miller felt as much out of his element as a dolphin in a sentry-box.

Meanwhile the round game proceeded right merrily. Isabella Wardle and Mr. Trundle "went partners," and Emily Wardle and Mr. Snodgrass did the same; and even Mr. Tupman and the spinster aunt established a joint-stock company of fish and flattery. Old Mr. Wardle was in the very height of his jollity; and he was so funny in his management of the board, and the old ladies were so sharp after their winnings, that the whole table was in a perpetual roar of merriment and laughter. There was one old lady who always had about half-a-dozen cards to pay for, at which everybody laughed, regularly every round; and when the old lady looked cross at having to pay, they laughed louder than ever; on which the old lady's face gradually brightened up, till at last she laughed louder than any of them. Then, when the spinster aunt got "matrimony," the young ladies laughed afresh, and the spinster aunt seemed disposed to be pettish; till, feeling Mr. Tupman squeezing her hand under the table, *she* brightened up too, and looked rather knowing, as if matrimony in reality were not quite so far off as some people thought for; whereupon everybody laughed again, and especially old Mr. Wardle, who enjoyed a joke as much as the youngest. As to Mr. Snodgrass, he did nothing but whisper poetical sentiments into his partner's ear, which made one old gentleman facetiously sly, about partnerships at cards and partnerships for life, and caused the aforesaid old gentleman to make some remarks thereupon, accompanied with divers winks and chuckles, which made the company very merry and the old gentleman's wife especially so. And Mr. Winkle came out with jokes which are very well known in town, but are not at all known in the country: and as everybody laughed at them very heartily, and said they were very capital, Mr. Winkle was in a state of great honour and glory. And the benevolent clergyman looked pleasantly on; for the happy faces which surrounded the table made the good old man feel happy too; and though the merriment was rather boisterous, still it came from the heart and not from the lips: and this is the right sort of merriment, after all.

The evening glided swiftly away, in these cheerful recreations; and when the substantial though homely supper had been despatched, and the little party formed a social circle round the fire, Mr. Pickwick thought he had never felt so happy in his life, and at no time so much disposed to enjoy, and make the most of, the passing moment.

"Now this," said the hospitable host, who was sitting in great state next the old lady's arm-chair, with her hand fast clasped in his—"This is just what I like—the happiest moments of my life have been passed at this old fire-side: and I am so attached to it, that I keep up a blazing fire here every evening, until it actually grows too hot to bear it. Why, my poor old mother, here, used to sit before this fire-place upon that little stool when she was a girl; didn't you, mother?"

The tear which starts unbidden to the eye when the recollection of old times and the happiness of many years ago is suddenly recalled, stole down the old lady's face as she shook her head with a melancholy smile.

"You must excuse my talking about this old place, Mr. Pickwick," resumed the host, after a short pause, "for I love it dearly, and know no other—the old houses and fields seem like living friends to me: and so does our little church with the ivy,—about which, by-the-bye, our excellent friend there made a song when he first came amongst us. Mr. Snodgrass, have you anything in your glass?"

"Plenty, thank you," replied that gentleman, whose poetic curiosity had been greatly excited by the last observations of his entertainer. "I beg your pardon, but you were talking about the song of the Ivy."

"You must ask our friend opposite about that," said the host knowingly: indicating the clergyman by a nod of his head.

"May I say that I should like to hear you repeat it, sir?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Why really," replied the clergyman, "it's a very slight affair; and the only excuse I have for having ever perpetrated it is, that I was a young man at the time. Such as it is, however, you shall hear it if you wish."

A murmur of curiosity was of course the reply; and the old gentleman proceeded to recite, with the aid of sundry promptings from his wife, the lines in question. "I call them," said he,

THE IVY GREEN

Oh, a dainty plant is the Ivy green,
That creepeth o'er ruins old!
Of right choice food are his meals I ween,
In his cell so lone and cold.
The wall must be crumbled, the stone decayed,
To pleasure his dainty whim:

And the mouldering dust that years have made
Is a merry meal for him.

Creeping where no life is seen,
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

Fast he stealeth on, though he wears no wings,
And a staunch old heart has he.
How closely he twineth, how tight he clings
To his friend the huge Oak Tree!

And shily he traileth along the ground,
And his leaves he gently waves,
As he joyously hugs and crawleth round
The rich mould of dead men's graves.

Creeping where grim death has been,
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

Whole ages have fled and their works decayed,
And nations have scattered been,
But the stout old Ivy shall never fade,
From its hale and hearty green.
The brave old plant in its lonely days,
Shall fatten upon the past:
For the stateliest building man can raise,
Is the Ivy's food at last.

Creeping on, where time has been,
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

While the old gentleman repeated these lines a second time, to enable Mr. Snodgrass to note them down, Mr. Pickwick perused the lineaments of his face with an expression of great interest. The old gentleman having concluded his dictation, and Mr. Snodgrass having returned his note-book to his pocket, Mr. Pickwick said:

"Excuse me, sir, for making the remark on so short an acquaintance; but a gentleman like yourself cannot fail, I should think, to have observed many scenes and incidents worth recording, in the course of your experience as a minister of the Gospel."

"I have witnessed some certainly," replied the old gentleman; "but the incidents and characters have been of a homely and ordinary nature, my sphere of action being so very limited."

"You *did* make some notes, I think, about John Edmunds, did you not?" inquired Mr. Wardle, who appeared very desirous to draw his friend out, for the edification of his new visitors.

The old gentleman slightly nodded his head in token of assent, and was proceeding to change the subject, when Mr. Pickwick said—

"I beg your pardon, sir; but pray, if I may venture to inquire, who was John Edmunds?"

"The very thing I was about to ask," said Mr. Snodgrass, eagerly.

"You are fairly in for it," said the jolly host. "You must satisfy the curiosity of these gentlemen, sooner or later; so you had better take advantage of this favourable opportunity, and do so at once."

The old gentleman smiled good-humouredly as he drew his chair forward;—the remainder of the party drew their chairs closer together, especially Mr. Tupman and the spinster aunt, who were possibly rather hard of hearing; and the old lady's ear trumpet having been duly adjusted, and Mr. Miller (who had fallen asleep during the recital of the verses) roused from his slumbers by an admonitory pinch, administered beneath the table by his ex-partner the solemn fat man, the old gentleman, without farther preface, commenced the following tale.

* * * * *

CHAPTER VII

HOW MR. WINKLE, INSTEAD OF SHOOTING AT THE PIGEON
AND KILLING THE CROW, SHOT AT THE CROW AND
WOUNDED THE PIGFO

THE fatiguing adventures of the day or the somniferous influence of the clergyman's tale operated so strongly on the drowsy tendencies of Mr. Pickwick, that in less than five minutes after he had been shown to his comfortable bedroom, he fell into a sound and dreamless sleep, from which he was only awakened by the morning sun darting his bright beams reproachfully into the apartment. Mr. Pickwick was no sluggard; and he sprang like an ardent warrior from his tent--bedstead.

"Pleasant, pleasant country," sighed the enthusiastic gentleman, as he opened his lattice window. "Who could live to gaze from day to day on bricks and slates, who had once felt the influence of a scene like this? Who could continue to exist, where there are no cows but the cows on the chimney-pots; nothing redolent of Pan but pan-tiles; no crop but stone crop? Who could bear to drag out a life in such a spot? Who I ask could endure it?" and, having cross-examined solitude after the most approved precedents, at considerable length, Mr. Pickwick thrust his head out of the lattice, and looked around him.

The rich, sweet smell of the hayricks rose to his chamber window; the hundred perfumes of the little flower-garden beneath scented the air around; the deep-green meadows shone in the morning dew that glistened on every leaf as it trembled in the gentle air: and the birds sang as if every sparkling drop were a fountain of inspiration to them. Mr. Pickwick fell into an enchanting and delicious reverie.

"Hallo!" was the sound that roused him.

He looked to the right, but he saw nobody; his eyes wandered to the left, and pierced the prospect; he stared

into the sky, but he wasn't wanted there; and then he did what a common mind would have done at once—looked into the garden, and there saw Mr. Wardle.

"How are you?" said that good-humoured individual, out of breath with his own anticipations of pleasure. "Beautiful morning, an't it? Glad to see you up so early. Make haste down, and come out. I'll wait for you here."

Mr. Pickwick needed no second invitation. Ten minutes sufficed for the completion of his toilet, and at the expiration of that time he was by the old gentleman's side.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Pickwick in his turn: seeing that his companion was armed with a gun, and that another lay ready on the grass. "What's going forward?"

"Why, your friend and I," replied the host, "are going out rook-shooting before breakfast. He's a very good shot, an't he?"

"I've heard him say he's a capital one," replied Mr. Pickwick; "but I never saw him aim at anything."

"Well," said the host, "I wish he'd come. Joe—Joe!"

The fat boy, who under the exciting influence of the morning did not appear to be more than three parts and a fraction asleep, emerged from the house.

"Go up, and call the gentleman, and tell him he'll find me and Mr. Pickwick in the rookery. Show the gentleman the way there; d'ye hear?"

The boy departed to execute his commission; and the host, carrying both guns like a second Robinson Crusoe, led the way from the garden.

"This is the place," said the old gentleman, pausing after a few minutes' walking, in an avenue of trees. The information was unnecessary; for the incessant cawing of the unconscious rooks sufficiently indicated their whereabouts.

The old gentleman laid one gun on the ground, and loaded the other.

"Here they are," said Mr. Pickwick; and as he spoke, the forms of Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle appeared in the distance. The fat boy, not being quite certain which gentleman he was directed to call, had with peculiar sagacity, and to prevent the possibility of any mistake, called them all.

"Come along," shouted the old gentleman, addressing Mr. Winkle; "a keen hand like you ought to have been up long ago, even to such poor work as this."

Mr. Winkle responded with a forced smile, and took up the spare gun with an expression of countenance which a metaphysical rook, impressed with a foreboding of his approaching death by violence, may be supposed to assume. It might have been keenness, but it looked remarkably like misery.

The old gentleman nodded ; and two ragged boys who had been marshalled to the spot under the direction of the infant Lambert, forthwith commenced climbing up two of the trees.

"What are those lads for?" inquired Mr. Pickwick abruptly. He was rather alarmed ; for he was not quite certain but that the distress of the agricultural interest, about which he had often heard a great deal, might have compelled the small boys attached to the soil to earn a precarious and hazardous subsistence by making marks of themselves for inexperienced sportsmen.

"Only to start the game," replied Mr. Wardle, laughing.

"To what?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, in plain English to frighten the rooks."

"Oh! is that all?"

"You are satisfied?"

"Quite."

"Very well. Shall I begin?"

"If you please," said Mr. Winkle, glad of any respite.

"Stand aside, then. Now for it."

The boy shouted, and shook a branch with a nest on it. Half-a-dozen young rooks in violent conversation, flew out to ask what the matter was. The old gentleman fired by way of reply. Down fell one bird, and off flew the others.

"Take him up, Joe," said the old gentleman.

There was a smile upon the youth's face as he advanced. Indistinct visions of rook-pie floated through his imagination. He laughed as he retired with the bird—it was a plump one.

"Now, Mr. Winkle," said the host, reloading his own gun. "Fire away."

Mr. Winkle advanced, and levelled his gun. Mr. Pickwick and his friends cowered involuntarily to escape damage from the heavy fall of rooks, which they felt quite certain would be occasioned by the devastating barrel of their friend. There was a solemn pause—a shout—a flapping of wings—a faint click.

"Hallo!" said the old gentleman.

"Won't it go?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Missed fire," said Mr. Winkle, who was very pale: probably from disappointment.

"Odd," said the old gentleman, taking the gun. "Never knew one of them miss fire before. Why, I don't see anything of the cap."

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Winkle. "I declare I forgot the cap!"

The slight omission was rectified. Mr. Pickwick crouched again. Mr. Winkle stepped forward with an air of determination and resolution; and Mr. Tupman looked out from behind a tree. The boy shouted; four birds flew out. Mr. Winkle fired. There was a scream as of an individual—not a rook—in corporeal anguish. Mr. Tupman had saved the lives of innumerable unoffending birds by receiving a portion of the charge in his left arm.

To describe the confusion that ensued would be impossible. To tell how Mr. Pickwick in the first transports of his emotion called Mr. Winkle "Wretch!" how Mr. Tupman lay prostrate on the ground; and how Mr. Winkle knelt horror-stricken beside him; how Mr. Tupman called distractedly upon some feminine Christian name, and then opened first one eye, and then the other, and then fell back and shut them both;—all this would be as difficult to describe in detail, as it would be to depict the gradual recovering of the unfortunate individual, the binding up of his arm with pocket-handkerchiefs, and the conveying him back by slow degrees supported by the arms of his anxious friends.

They drew near the house. The ladies were at the garden-gate, waiting for their arrival and their breakfast. The spinster aunt appeared; she smiled, and beckoned them to walk quicker. 'Twas evident she knew not of the disaster. Poor thing! there are times when ignorance is bliss indeed.

They approached nearer.

"Why, what is the matter with the little old gentleman?" said Isabella Wardle. The spinster aunt heeded not the remark; she thought it applied to Mr. Pickwick. In her eyes Tracy Tupman was a youth; she viewed his years through a diminishing glass.

"Don't be frightened," called out the old host, fearful of alarming his daughters. The little party had crowded so completely round Mr. Tupman, that they could not yet clearly discern the nature of the accident.

"Don't be frightened," said the host.

"What's the matter?" screamed the ladies.

"Mr. Tupman has met with a little accident; that's all."

The spinster aunt uttered a piercing scream, burst into a hysteric laugh, and fell backwards in the arms of her nieces.

"Throw some cold water over her," said the old gentleman.

"No, no," murmured the spinster aunt; "I am better now. Bella, Emily—a surgeon! Is he wounded?—Is he dead?—Is he—ha, ha, ha!" Here the spinster aunt burst into fit number two, of hysteric laughter interspersed with screams.

"Calm yourself," said Mr. Tupman, affected almost to tears by this expression of sympathy with his sufferings. "Dear, dear madam, calm yourself."

"It is his voice!" exclaimed the spinster aunt; and strong symptoms of fit number three developed themselves forthwith.

"Do not agitate yourself, I entreat you, dearest madam," said Mr. Tupman soothingly. "I am very little hurt, I assure you."

"Then you are not dead!" ejaculated the hysterical lady.

"Oh, say you are not dead!"

"Don't be a fool, Rachael," interposed Mr. Wardle, rather more roughly than was quite consistent with the poetic nature of the scene. "What the devil's the use of his *saying* he isn't dead?"

"No, no, I am not," said Mr. Tupman. "I require no assistance but yours. Let me lean on your arm." He added, in a whisper, "Oh, Miss Rachael!" The agitated female advanced, and offered her arm. They turned into the breakfast parlour. Mr. Tracy Tupman gently pressed her hand to his lips, and sank upon the sofa.

"Are you faint?" inquired the anxious Rachael.

"No," said Mr. Tupman. "It is nothing. I shall be better presently." He closed his eyes.

"He sleeps," murmured the spinster aunt. (His organs of vision had been closed nearly twenty seconds). "Dear—dear—Mr. Tupman!"

Mr. Tupman jumped up—"Oh, say those words again!" he exclaimed.

The lady started. "Surely you did not hear them!" she said, bashfully.

"Oh yes, I did!" replied Mr. Tupman; "repeat them. If you would have me recover, repeat them."

"Hush!" said the lady. "My brother."

Mr. Tracy Tupman resumed his former position ; and Mr. Wardle, accompanied by a surgeon, entered the room.

‘The arm was examined, the wound dressed, and pronounced to be a very slight one ; and the minds of the company having been thus satisfied, they proceeded to satisfy their appetites with countenances to which an expression of cheerfulness was again restored. Mr. Pickwick alone was silent and reserved. Doubt and distrust were exhibited in his countenance. His confidence in Mr. Winkle had been shaken — greatly shaken — by the proceedings of the morning.

“Are you a cricketer ?” inquired Mr. Wardle of the marksman.

At any other time, Mr. Winkle would have replied in the affirmative. He felt the delicacy of his situation, and modestly replied, “No.”

“Are you, sir ?” inquired Mr. Snodgrass.

“I was once upon a time,” replied the host ; “but I have given it up now. I subscribe to the club here, but I don’t play.”

“The grand match is played to-day, I believe,” said Mr. Pickwick.

“It is,” replied the host. “Of course you would like to see it.”

“I, sir,” replied Mr. Pickwick, “am delighted to view any sports which may be safely indulged in, and in which the impotent effects of unskilful people do not endanger human life.” Mr. Pickwick paused, and looked steadily on Mr. Winkle, who quailed beneath his leader’s searching glance. The great man withdrew his eyes after a few minutes, and added : “Shall we be justified in leaving our wounded friend to the care of the ladies ?”

“You cannot leave me in better hands,” said Mr. Tupman.

“Quite impossible,” said Mr. Snodgrass.

It was therefore settled that Mr. Tupman should be left at home in charge of the females ; and that the remainder of the guests, under the guidance of Mr. Wardle, should proceed to the spot where was to be held that trial of skill, which had roused all Muggleton from its torpor, and inoculated Dingley Dell with a fever of excitement.

CHAPTER VIII

STRONGLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE POSITION, THAT THE
COURSE OF TRUE LOVE IS NOT A RAILWAY

THE quiet seclusion of Dingley Dell, the presence of so many of the gentler sex, and the solicitude and anxiety they evinced in his behalf, were all favourable to the growth and development of those softer feelings which nature had implanted deep in the bosom of Mr. Tracy Tupman, and which now appeared destined to centre in one lovely object. The young ladies were pretty, their manners winning, their dispositions unexceptionable; but there was a dignity in the air, a touch-me-not-ishness in the walk, a majesty in the eye of the spinster aunt, to which, at their time of life, they could lay no claim, which distinguished her from any female on whom Mr. Tupman had ever gazed. That there was something kindred in their nature, something congenial in their souls, something mysteriously sympathetic in their bosoms, was evident. Her name was the first that rose to Mr. Tupman's lips as he lay wounded on the grass; and her hysteric laughter was the first sound that fell upon his ear when he was supported to the house. But had her agitation arisen from an amiable and feminine sensibility which would have been equally irrepressible in any case; or had it been called forth by a more ardent and passionate feeling, which he, of all men living, could alone awaken? These were the doubts which racked his brain as he lay extended on the sofa: these were the doubts which he determined should be at once and for ever resolved.

It was evening. Isabella and Emily had strolled out with Mr. Trundle; the deaf old lady had fallen asleep in her chair; the snoring of the fat boy, penetrated in a low and monotonous sound from the distant kitchen; the buxom servants were lounging at the side-door, enjoying the pleasantness of the hour, and the delights of a flirtation, on first principles, with certain unwieldy animals attached

to the farm; and there sat the interesting pair, uncared for by all caring for none, and dreaming only of themselves; there they sat, in short, like a pair of carefully-folded kid-gloves—bound up in each other.

"I have forgotten my flowers," said the spinster aunt.

"Water them now," said Mr. Tupman in accents of persuasion.

"You will take cold in the evening air," urged the spinster aunt, affectionately.

"No, no," said Mr. Tupman rising; "it will do me good. Let me accompany you."

The lady paused to adjust the sling in which the left arm of the youth was placed, and taking his right arm led him to the garden.

There was a bower at the further end, with honeysuckle, jessamine, and creeping plants—one of those sweet retreats which humane men erect for the accommodation of spiders.

The spinster aunt took up a large watering-pot which lay in one corner, and was about to leave the arbour. Mr. Tupman detained her, and drew her to a seat beside him.

"Miss Wardle!" said he.

The spinster aunt trembled, till some pebbles which had accidentally found their way into the large watering-pot shook like an infant's rattle.

"Miss Wardle," said Mr. Tupman, "you are an angel."

"Mr. Tupman!" exclaimed Rachael, blushing as red as the watering-pot itself.

"Nay," said the eloquent Pickwickian—"I know it but too well."

"All women are angels, they say," murmured the lady, playfully.

"Then what can *you* be; or to what, without presumption, can I compare you?" replied Mr. Tupman. "Where was the woman ever seen who resembled you? Where else could I hope to find so rare a combination of excellence and beauty? Where else could I seek to—Oh!" Here Mr. Tupman paused, and pressed the hand which clasped the handle of the happy watering-pot.

The lady turned aside her head. "Men are such deceivers," she softly whispered.

"They are, they are," ejaculated Mr. Tupman; "but not all men. There lives at least one being who can never change—one being who would be content to devote his whole

existence to your happiness—who lives but in your eyes—who breathes but in your smiles—who bears the heavy burden of life itself only for you.”

“Could such an individual be found,” said the lady——

“But he *can* be found,” said the ardent Mr. Tupman, interposing. “He *is* found. He is here, Miss Wardle.” And ere the lady was aware of his intention, Mr. Tupman had sunk upon his knees at her feet.

“Mr. Tupman, rise,” said Rachael.

“Never!” was the valorous reply. “Oh, Rachael!”—He seized her passive hand, and the watering-pot fell to the ground as he pressed it to his lips.—“Oh, Rachael! say you love me.”

“Mr. Tupman,” said the spinster aunt, with averted head—“I can hardly speak the words; but—but—you are not wholly indifferent to me.”

Mr. Tupman no sooner heard this avowal, than he proceeded to do what his enthusiastic emotions prompted, and what, for aught we know (for we are but little acquainted with such matters), people so circumstanced always do. He jumped up, and, throwing his arm round the neck of the spinster aunt, imprinted upon her lips numerous kisses, which after a due show of struggling and resistance, she received so passively, that there is no telling how many more Mr. Tupman might have bestowed, if the lady had not given a very unaffected start and exclaimed in an affrighted tone—

“Mr. Tupman, we are observed!—we are discovered!”

Mr. Tupman looked round. There was the fat boy, perfectly motionless, with his large circular eyes staring into the arbour, but without the slightest expression on his face that the most expert physiognomist could have referred to astonishment, curiosity, or any other known passion that agitates the human breast. Mr. Tupman gazed on the fat boy, and the fat boy stared at him; and the longer Mr. Tupman observed the utter vacancy of the fat boy's countenance, the more convinced he became that he either did not know, or did not understand, anything that had been going forward. Under this impression, he said with great firmness—

“What do you want here, sir?”

“Supper's ready, sir,” was the prompt reply.

“Have you just come here, sir?” inquired Mr. Tupman, with a piercing look.

"Just," replied the fat boy.

Mr. Tupman looked at him very hard again; but there was not a wink in his eye, or a curve in his face.

Mr. Tupman took the arm of the spinster aunt, and walked towards the house; the fat boy followed behind.

"He knows nothing of what has happened," he whispered.

"Nothing," said the spinster aunt.

There was a sound behind them, as of an imperfectly suppressed chuckle. Mr. Tupman turned sharply round. No; it could not have been the fat boy; there was not a gleam of mirth, or anything but feeding in his whole visage.

"He must have been fast asleep," whispered Mr. Tupman.

"I have not the least doubt of it," replied the spinster aunt.

They both laughed heartily.

Mr. Tupman was wrong. The fat boy, for once, had not been fast asleep. He was awake—wide awake—to what had been going forward.

The supper passed off without any attempt at a general conversation. The old lady had gone to bed; Isabella Wardle devoted herself exclusively to Mr. Trundle; the spinster's attentions were reserved for Mr. Tupman; and Emily's thoughts appeared to be engrossed by some distant object—possibly they were with the absent Snodgrass.

Eleven—twelve—one o'clock had struck, and the gentlemen had not arrived. Consternation sat on every face. Could they have been waylaid and robbed? Should they send men and lanterns in every direction by which they could be supposed likely to have travelled home? or should they——Hark! there they were. What could have made them so late? A strange voice, too! To whom could it belong? They rushed into the kitchen whither the truants had repaired, and at once obtained rather more than a glimmering of the real state of the case.

Mr. Pickwick, with his hands in his pockets and his hat cocked completely over his left eye, was leaning against the dresser, shaking his head from side to side, and producing a constant succession of the blandest and most benevolent smiles without being moved thereunto by any discernible cause or pretence whatsoever; old Mr. Wardle, with a highly-inflamed countenance, was grasping the hand of a strange gentleman muttering protestations of eternal friendship; Mr. Winkle, supporting himself by the eight-day clock, was



THE FAT BOY AWAKE

feebly invoking destruction upon the head of any member of the family who should suggest the propriety of his retiring for the night; and Mr. Snodgrass had sunk into a chair, with an expression of the most abject and hopeless misery that the human mind can imagine, portrayed in every lineament of his expressive face.

"Is anything the matter?" inquired the three ladies.

"Nothing the matter," replied Mr. Pickwick. "We—we're—all right.—I say, Wardle, we're all right, an't we?"

"I should think so," replied the jolly host.—"My dears, here's my friend, Mr. Jingle—Mr. Pickwick's friend, Mr. Jingle, come 'pon—little visit."

"Is anything the matter with Mr. Snodgrass, sir?" inquired Emily, with great anxiety.

"Nothing the matter, ma'am," replied the stranger. "Cricket dinner—glorious party—capital songs—old port—claret—good—very good—wine, ma'am—wine."

"It wasn't the wine," murmured Mr. Snodgrass, in a broken voice. "It was the salmon." (Somehow or other, it never is the wine, in these cases.)

"Hadn't they better go to bed, ma'am?" inquired Emma. "Two of the boys will carry the gentlemen up stairs."

"I won't go to bed," said Mr. Winkle, firmly.

"No living boy shall carry me," said Mr. Pickwick, stoutly;—and he went on smiling as before.

"Hurrah!" gasped Mr. Winkle, faintly.

"Hurrah!" echoed Mr. Pickwick, taking off his hat and dashing it on the floor, and insanely casting his spectacles into the middle of the kitchen.—At this humorous feat he laughed outright.

"Let's—have—'nother—bottle," cried Mr. Winkle, commencing in a very loud key, and ending in a very faint one. His head dropped upon his breast; and, muttering his invincible determination not to go to his bed, and a sanguinary regret that he had not "done for old Tupman" in the morning, he fell fast asleep; in which condition he was borne to his apartment by two young giants under the personal superintendence of the fat boy, to whose protecting care Mr. Snodgrass shortly afterwards confided his own person. Mr. Pickwick accepted the proffered arm of Mr. Tupman and quietly disappeared, smiling more than ever; and Mr. Wardle, after taking as affectionate a leave of the whole family as if he were ordered for immediate execution,

consigned to Mr. Trundle the honour of conveying him upstairs, and retired, with a very futile attempt to look impressively solemn and dignified.

"What a shocking scene!" said the spinster aunt.

"Dis—gusting!" ejaculated both the young ladies.

"Dreadful—dreadful!" said Jingle, looking very grave: he was about a bottle and a half ahead of any of his companions. "Horrid spectacle—very!"

"What a nice man!" whispered the spinster aunt to Mr. Tupman.

"Good-looking, too!" whispered Emily Wardle.

"Oh, decidedly," observed the spinster aunt.

Mr. Tupman thought of the widow at Rochester: and his mind was troubled. The succeeding half-hour's conversation was not of a nature to calm his perturbed spirit. The new visitor was very talkative, and the number of his anecdotes was only to be exceeded by the extent of his politeness. Mr. Tupman felt that as Jingle's popularity increased, he (Tupman) retired further into the shade. His laughter was forced—his merriment feigned; and when at last he laid his aching temples between the sheets, he thought, with horrid delight, on the satisfaction it would afford him to have Jingle's head at that moment between the feather bed and the mattress.

The indefatigable stranger rose betimes next morning, and, although his companions remained in bed overpowered with the dissipation of the previous night, exerted himself most successfully to promote the hilarity of the breakfast-table. So successful were his efforts, that even the deaf old lady insisted on having one or two of his best jokes retailed through the trumpet; and even she condescended to observe to the spinster aunt, that "he" (meaning Jingle) "was an impudent young fellow:" a sentiment in which all her relations then and there present thoroughly coincided.

It was the old lady's habit on the fine summer mornings to repair to the arbour in which Mr. Tupman had already signalled himself, in form and manner following: first, the fat boy fetched from a peg behind the old lady's bed-room door, a close black satin bonnet, a warm cotton shawl, and a thick stick with a capacious handle; and the old lady having put on the bonnet and shawl at her leisure, would lean one hand on the stick and the other on the fat boy's shoulder, and walk leisurely to the arbour, where the fat boy



WARDLE AND HIS FRIENDS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF
"THE SALMON"

would leave her to enjoy the fresh air for the space of half an hour; at the expiration of which time he would return and reconduct her to the house.

The old lady was very precise and very particular; and as this ceremony had been observed for three successive summers without the slightest deviation from the accustomed form, she was not a little surprised on this particular morning, to see the fat boy, instead of leaving the arbour, walk a few paces out of it, look carefully round him in every direction, and return towards her with great stealth and an air of the most profound mystery.

The old lady was timorous—most old ladies are—and her first impression was that the bloated lad was about to do her some grievous bodily harm with the view of possessing himself of her loose coin. She would have cried for assistance, but age and infirmity had long ago deprived her of the power of screaming; she, therefore, watched his motions with feelings of intense terror, which were in no degree diminished by his coming close up to her, and shouting in her ear in an agitated, and as it seemed to her, a threatening tone—

“Missus!”

Now it so happened that Mr. Jingle was walking in the garden close to the arbour at this moment. He too heard the shout of “Missus,” and stopped to hear more. There were three reasons for his doing so. In the first place, he was idle and curious; secondly, he was by no means scrupulous; thirdly, and lastly, he was concealed from view by some flowering shrubs. So there he stood, and there he listened.

“Missus!” shouted the fat boy.

“Well, Joe,” said the trembling old lady. “I’m sure I have been a good mistress to you, Joe. You have invariably been treated very kindly. You have never had too much to do; and you have always had enough to eat.”

This last was an appeal to the fat boy’s most sensitive feelings. He seemed touched, as he replied, emphatically—

“I knows I has.”

“Then what can you want to do now?” said the old lady, gaining courage.

“I wants to make your flesh creep,” replied the boy.

This sounded like a very bloodthirsty mode of showing one’s gratitude; and as the old lady did not precisely understand the process by which such a result was to be attained, all her former horrors returned.

"What do you think I see in this very arbour last night?" inquired the boy.

"Bless us! What?" exclaimed the old lady, alarmed at the solemn manner of the corpulent youth.

"The strange gentleman—him as had his arm hurt—a kissin' and huggin'——"

"Who, Joe? None of the servants, I hope."

"Worser than that," roared the fat boy, in the old lady's ear.

"Not one of my grand-da'aters?"

"Worser than that."

"Worse than *that*, Joe!" said the old lady, who had thought this the extreme limit of human atrocity. "Who was it, Joe? I insist upon knowing."

The fat boy looked cautiously round, and having concluded his survey, shouted in the old lady's ear:

"Miss Rachael."

"What!" said the old lady, in a shrill tone. "Speak louder."

"Miss Rachael," roared the fat boy.

"My da'ater!"

The train of nods which the fat boy gave by way of assent, communicated a *blanc-mange* like motion to his fat cheeks.

"And she suffered him!" exclaimed the old lady.

A grin stole over the fat boy's features as he said:

"I see her a kissin' of him agin."

If Mr. Jingle, from his place of concealment, could have beheld the expression which the old lady's face assumed at this communication, the probability is that a sudden burst of laughter would have betrayed his close vicinity to the summer-house. He listened attentively. Fragments of angry sentences such as, "Without my permission!"—"At her time of life"—"Miserable old 'ooman like me"—"Might have waited till I was dead," and so forth, reached his ears; and then he heard the heels of the fat boy's boots crunching the gravel, as he retired and left the old lady alone.

It was a remarkable coincidence perhaps, but it was nevertheless a fact, that Mr. Jingle within five minutes after his arrival at Manor Farm on the preceding night, had inwardly resolved to lay siege to the heart of the spinster aunt, without delay. He had observation enough to see, that his off-hand manner was by no means disagreeable to the fair object of his attack; and he had more than a strong

suspicion that she possessed that most desirable of all requisites, a small independence. The imperative necessity of ousting his rival by some means or other, flashed quickly upon him, and he immediately resolved to adopt certain proceedings tending to that end and object, without a moment's delay. Fielding tells us that man is fire, and woman tow, and the Prince of Darkness sets a light to 'em. Mr. Jingle knew that young meh, to spinster aunts, are as lighted gas to gunpowder, and he determined to essay the effect of an explosion without loss of time.

Full of reflections upon this important decision, he crept from his place of concealment, and, under cover of the shrubs before mentioned, approached the house. Fortune seemed determined to favour his design. Mr. Tupman and the rest of the gentlemen left the garden by the side gate just as he obtained a view of it; and the young ladies, he knew, had walked out alone, soon after breakfast. The coast was clear.

The breakfast-parlour door was partially open. He peeped in. The spinster aunt was knitting. He coughed; she looked up and smiled. Hesitation formed no part of Mr. Alfred Jingle's character. He laid his finger on his lips mysteriously, walked in, and closed the door.

"Miss Wardle," said Mr. Jingle, with affected earnestness, "forgive intrusion—short acquaintance—no time for ceremony—all discovered."

"Sir!" said the spinster aunt, rather astonished by the unexpected apparition and somewhat doubtful of Mr. Jingle's sanity.

"Hush!" said Mr. Jingle, in a stage whisper;—"large boy—dumpling face—round eyes—rascal!" Here he shook his head expressively, and the spinster aunt trembled with agitation.

"I presume you allude to Joseph, sir?" said the lady, making an effort to appear composed.

"Yes, ma'am—damn that Joe!—treacherous dog, Joe—told the old lady—old lady furious—wild—raving—arbour—Tupman—kissing and hugging—all that sort of thing—eh, ma'am—eh?"

"Mr. Jingle," said the spinster aunt, "if you come here, sir, to insult me ——"

"Not at all—by no means," replied the unabashed Mr. Jingle;—"overheard the tale—came to warn you of your danger—tender my services—prevent the hubbub. Never

mind—think it an insult—leave the room”—and he turned, as if to carry the threat into execution.

“What *shall* I do!” said the poor spinster, bursting into tears. “My brother will be furious.”

“Of course he will,” said Mr. Jingle, pausing—“outrageous.”

“Oh, Mr. Jingle, what *can* I say!” exclaimed the spinster aunt, in another flood of despair.

“Say he dreamt it,” replied Mr. Jingle, coolly.

A ray of comfort darted across the mind of the spinster aunt at this suggestion. Mr. Jingle perceived it, and followed up his advantage.

“Pooh, pooh!—nothing more easy—blackguard boy—lovely woman—fat boy horsewhipped—you believed—end of the matter—all comfortable.”

Whether the probability of escaping from the consequences of this ill-timed discovery was delightful to the spinster’s feelings, or whether the hearing herself described as a “lovely woman” softened the asperity of her grief, we know not. She blushed slightly, and cast a grateful look on Mr. Jingle.

That insinuating gentleman sighed deeply, fixed his eyes on the spinster aunt’s face for a couple of minutes, started melo-dramatically, and suddenly withdrew them.

“You seem unhappy, Mr. Jingle,” said the lady, in a plaintive voice. “May I show my gratitude for your kind interference, by inquiring into the cause, with a view, if possible, to its removal?”

“Ha!” exclaimed Mr. Jingle, with another start—“removal! remove *my* unhappiness, and your love bestowed upon a man who is insensible to the blessing—who even now contemplates a design upon the affections of the niece of the creature who—but no; he is my friend; I will not expose his vices. Miss Wardle—farewell!” At the conclusion of this address, the most consecutive he was ever known to utter, Mr. Jingle applied to his eyes the remnant of a handkerchief before noticed, and turned towards the door.

“Stay, Mr. Jingle!” said the spinster aunt emphatically. “You have made an allusion to Mr. Tupman—explain it.”

“Never!” exclaimed Jingle, with a professional (*i.e.* theatrical) air. “Never!” and, by way of showing that he had no desire to be questioned further, he drew a chair close to that of the spinster aunt and sat down.

"Mr. Jingle," said the aunt, "I entreat—I implore you, if there is any dreadful mystery connected with Mr. Tupman, reveal it."

"Can I," said Mr. Jingle, fixing his eyes on the aunt's face—"can I see—lovely creature—sacrificed at the shrine—heartless avarice!" He appeared to be struggling with various conflicting emotions for a few seconds, and then said in a low deep voice—

"Tupman only wants your money."

"The wretch!" exclaimed the spinster, with energetic indignation. (Mr. Jingle's doubts were resolved. She *had* money).

"More than that," said Jingle—"loves another."

"Another!" ejaculated the spinster. "Who?"

"Short girl—black eyes—niece Emily."

There was a pause.

Now, if there were one individual in the whole world, of whom the spinster aunt entertained a mortal and deeply-rooted jealousy, it was this identical niece. The colour rushed over her face and neck, and she tossed her head in silence with an air of ineffable contempt. At last, biting her thin lips, and bridleing up, she said—

"It can't be. I won't believe it."

"Watch 'em," said Jingle.

"I will," said the aunt.

"Watch his looks."

"I will."

"His whispers."

"I will."

"He'll sit next her at table."

"Let him."

"He'll flatter her."

"Let him."

"He'll pay her every possible attention."

"Let him."

"And he'll cut you."

"Cut *me*!" screamed the spinster aunt. "*He* cut *me*;—*will* he!" and she trembled with rage and disappointment.

"You will convince yourself?" said Jingle.

"I will."

"You'll show your spirit?"

"I will."

"You'll not have him afterwards?" .

"Never."

"You'll take somebody else?"

"Yes."

"You shall."

Mr. Jingle fell on his knees, remained thereupon for five minutes thereafter: and rose the accepted lover of the spinster aunt: conditionally upon Mr. Tupman's perjury being made clear and manifest.

The burden of proof lay with Mr. Alfred Jingle; and he produced his evidence that very day at dinner. The spinster aunt could hardly believe her eyes. Mr. Tracy Tupman was established at Emily's side, ogling, whispering, and smiling, in opposition to Mr. Snodgrass. Not a word, not a look, not a glance, did he bestow upon his heart's pride of the evening before.

"Damn that boy!" thought old Mr. Wardle to himself.—He had heard the story from his mother. "Damn that boy! He *must* have been asleep. It's all imagination."

"Traitor!" thought the spinster aunt. "Dear Mr. Jingle was not deceiving me. Ugh! how I hate the wretch!"

The following conversation may serve to explain to our readers this apparently unaccountable alteration of deportment on the part of Mr. Tracy Tupman.

The time was evening; the scene the garden. There were two figures walking in a side path; one was rather short and stout; the other rather tall and slim. They were Mr. Tupman and Mr. Jingle. The stout figure commenced the dialogue.

"How did I do it?" he inquired.

"Splendid—capital—couldn't act better myself—you must repeat the part to-morrow—every evening, till further notice."

"Does Rachael still wish it?"

"Of course—she don't like it—but must be done—avert suspicion—afraid of her brother—says there's no help for it—only a few days more—when old folks blinded—crown your happiness."

"Any message?"

"Love—best love—kindest regards—unalterable affection. Can I say anything for you?"

"My dear fellow," replied the unsuspecting Mr. Tupman, fervently grasping his "friend's" hand—"carry my best love—say how hard I find it to dissemble—say anything that's kind; but add how sensible I am of the necessity of the

suggestion she made to me, through you, this morning. Say I applaud her wisdom and admire her discretion."

"I will. Anything more?"

"Nothing; only add how ardently I long for the time when I may call her mine, and all dissimulation may be unnecessary."

"Certainly, certainly. Anything more?"

"Oh, my friend!" said poor Mr. Tupman, again grasping the hand of his companion, "receive my warmest thanks for your disinterested kindness and forgive me if I have ever, even in thought, done you the injustice of supposing that you *could* stand in my way. My dear friend, can I ever repay you?"

"Don't talk of it," replied Mr. Jingle. He stopped short, as if suddenly recollecting something, and said—"By-the-bye—can't spare ten pounds, can you?—very particular purpose—pay you in three days."

"I dare say I can," replied Mr. Tupman, in the fulness of his heart. "Three days, you say?"

"Only three days—all over then—no more difficulties."

Mr. Tupman counted the money into his companion's hand, and he dropped it piece by piece into his pocket, as they walked towards the house.

"Be careful," said Mr. Jingle—"not a look."

"Not a wink," said Mr. Tupman.

"Not a syllable."

"Not a whisper."

"All your attentions to the niece—rather rude, than otherwise, to the aunt—only way of deceiving the old ones."

"I'll take care," said Mr. Tupman aloud.

"And I'll take care," said Mr. Jingle internally; and they entered the house.

The scene of that afternoon was repeated that evening, and on the three afternoons and evenings next ensuing. On the fourth, the host was in high spirits, for he had satisfied himself that there was no ground for the charge against Mr. Tupman. So was Mr. Tupman, for Mr. Jingle had told him that his affair would soon be brought to a crisis. So was Mr. Pickwick, for he was seldom otherwise. So was not Mr. Snodgrass, for he had grown jealous of Mr. Tupman. So was the old lady, for she had been winning at whist. So were Mr. Jingle and Miss Wardle, for reasons of sufficient importance in this eventful history to be narrated in another chapter.

CHAPTER IX

A DISCOVERY AND A CHASE

THE supper was ready laid, the chairs were drawn round the table, bottles, jugs, and glasses were arranged upon the side-board, and everything betokened the approach of the most convivial period in the whole four-and-twenty hours.

"Where's Rachael?" said Mr. Wardle.

"Ay, and Jingle?" added Mr. Pickwick.

"Dear me," said the host, "I wonder I haven't missed him before. Why, I don't think I've heard his voice for two hours at least. Emily, my dear, ring the bell."

The bell was rung, and the fat boy appeared.

"Where's Miss Rachael?" He couldn't say

"Where's Mr. Jingle, then?" He didn't know

Everybody looked surprised. It was late—past eleven o'clock. Mr. Tupman laughed in his sleeve. They were loitering somewhere, talking about *him*. Ha, ha! capital notion that—funny.

"Never mind," said Wardle, after a short pause, "they'll turn up presently, I dare say. I never wait supper for anybody."

"Excellent rule, that," said Mr. Pickwick, "admirable."

"Pray, sit down," said the host.

"Certainly," said Mr. Pickwick: and down they sat.

There was a gigantic round of cold beef on the table, and Mr. Pickwick was supplied with a plentiful portion of it. He had raised his fork to his lips, and was on the very point of opening his mouth for the reception of a piece of beef, when the hum of many voices suddenly arose in the kitchen. He paused, and laid down his fork. Mr. Wardle paused too, and insensibly released his hold of the carving-knife, which remained inserted in the beef. He looked at Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Pickwick looked at him.

Heavy footsteps were heard in the passage; the parlour

door was suddenly burst open ; and the man who had cleaned Mr. Pickwick's boots on his first arrival, rushed into the room, followed by the fat boy, and all the domestics.

"What the devil's the meaning of this?" exclaimed the host.

"The kitchen chimney ain't a-fire, is it, Emma?" inquired the old lady.

"Lor', grandma! No," screamed both the young ladies.

"What's the matter?" roared the master of the house.

The man gasped for breath and faintly ejaculated—

"They ha' gone, Mas'r!—gone right clean off, sir!" (At this juncture Mr. Tupman was observed to lay down his knife and fork, and to turn very pale.)

"Who's gone?" said Mr. Wardle, fiercely.

"Mus'r Jingle and Miss Rachael, in a po'-chay, from Blue Lion, Muggleton. I was there; but I couldn't stop 'em; so I run off to tell'ee."

"I paid his expenses!" said Mr. Tupman, jumping up frantically. "He's got ten pounds of mine!—stop him!—he's swindled me!—I won't bear it!—I'll have justice, Pickwick!—I won't stand it!" and with sundry incoherent exclamations of the like nature, the unhappy gentleman spun round and round the apartment, in a transport of frenzy.

"Lord preserve us!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, eyeing the extraordinary gestures of his friend with terrified surprise. "He's gone mad! What shall we do!"

"Do!" said the stout old host, who regarded only the last words of the sentence. "Put the horse in the gig! I'll get a chaise at the Lion, and follow 'em instantly. Where"—he exclaimed, as the man ran out to execute the commission—"Where's that villain, Joe?"

"Here I am; but I han't a willin," replied a voice. It was the fat boy's.

"Let me get at him, Pickwick," cried Wardle, as he rushed at the ill-starred youth. "He was bribed by that scoundrel, Jingle, to put me on a wrong scent, by telling a cock-and-a-bull story of my sister and your friend Tupman!" (Here Mr. Tupman sunk into a chair.) "Let me get at him!"

"Don't let him!" screamed all the women, above whose exclamations the blubbing of the fat boy was distinctly audible.

"I won't be held!" cried the old man. "Mr. Winkle, take your hands off. Mr. Pickwick, let me go, sir!"

It was a beautiful sight, in that moment of turmoil and confusion, to behold the placid and philosophical expression of Mr. Pickwick's face, albeit somewhat flushed with exertion, as he stood with his arms firmly clasped round the extensive waist of their corpulent host, thus restraining the impetuosity of his passion, while the fat boy was scratched, and pulled, and pushed from the room by all the females congregated therein. He had no sooner released his hold, than the man entered to announce that the gig was ready.

"Don't let him go alone!" screamed the females. "He'll kill somebody!"

"I'll go with him," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You're a good fellow, Pickwick," said the host, grasping his hand. "Emma, give Mr. Pickwick a shawl to tie round his neck—make haste. Look after your grandmother, girls; she has fainted away. Now then, are you ready?"

Mr. Pickwick's mouth and chin having been hastily enveloped in a large shawl: his hat having been put on his head, and his great coat thrown over his arm, he replied in the affirmative.

They jumped into the gig. "Give her her head, Tom," cried the host; and away they went, down the narrow lanes: jolting in and out of the cart-ruts, and bumping up against the hedges on either side, as if they would go to pieces every moment.

"How much are they a-head?" shouted Wardle, as they drove up to the door of the Blue Lion, round which a little crowd had collected, late as it was.

"Not above three quarters of an hour," was everybody's reply.

"Chaise and four directly!—out with 'em! Put up the gig afterwards."

"Now, boys!" cried the landlord—"chaise and four out—make haste—look alive there!"

Away ran the hostlers, and the boys. The lanterns glimmered, as the men ran to and fro; the horses' hoofs clattered on the uneven paving of the yard; the chaise rumbled as it was drawn out of the coach-house; and all was noise and bustle.

"Now then!—is that chaise coming out to-night?" cried Wardle.

"Coming down the yard now, sir," replied the hostler.

Out came the chaise—in went the horses—on sprung the boys—in got the travellers.

“Mind—the seven-mile stage in less than half an hour!” shouted Wardle.

“Off with you!”

The boys applied whip and spur, the waiters shouted, the hostlers cheered, and away they went, fast and furiously.

“Pretty situation,” thought Mr. Pickwick, when he had had a moment’s time for reflection. “Pretty situation for the General Chairman of the Pickwick Club. Damp chaise—strange horses—fifteen miles an hour—and twelve o’clock at night!”

For the first three or four miles, not a word was spoken by either of the gentlemen, each being too much immersed in his own reflections to address any observations to his companion. When they had gone over that much ground, however, and the horses getting thoroughly warmed began to do their work in really good style, Mr. Pickwick became too much exhilarated with the rapidity of the motion, to remain any longer perfectly mute.

“We’re sure to catch them, I think,” said he.

“Hope so,” replied his companion.

“Fine night,” said Mr. Pickwick, looking up at the moon, which was shining brightly.

“So much the worse,” returned Wardle; “for they’ll have had all the advantage of the moonlight to get the start of us, and we shall lose it. It will have gone down in another hour.”

“It will be rather unpleasant going at this rate in the dark, won’t it?” inquired Mr. Pickwick.

“I dare say it will,” replied his friend drily.

Mr. Pickwick’s temporary excitement began to sober down a little, as he reflected upon the inconveniences and dangers of the expedition in which he had so thoughtlessly embarked. He was roused by a loud shouting of the post-boy on the leader.

“Yo—yo—yo—yo—yoe,” went the first boy.

“Yo—yo—yo—yoe!” went the second.

“Yo—yo—yo—yoe!” chimed in old Wardle himself, most lustily, with his head and half his body out of the coach window.

“Yo—yo—yo—yoe!” shouted Mr. Pickwick, taking up the burden of the cry, though he had not the slightest notion

of its meaning or object. And amidst the yo—yoing of the whole four, the chaise stopped.

"What's the matter?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"There's a gate here," replied old Wardle. "We shall hear something of the fugitives."

After a lapse of five minutes, consumed in incessant knocking and shouting, an old man in his shirt and trousers emerged from the turnpike-house, and opened the gate.

"How long is it since a post-chaise went through here?" inquired Mr. Wardle.

"How long?"

"Ah!"

"Why, I don't rightly know. It worn't a long time ago, nor it worn't a short time ago—just between the two, perhaps."

"Has any chaise been by at all?"

"Oh yes, there's been a shay by."

"How long ago, my friend," interposed Mr. Pickwick, "an hour?"

"Ah, I daresay it might be," replied the man.

"Or two hours?" inquired the post-boy on the wheeler.

"Well, I shouldn't wonder if it was," returned the old man doubtfully.

"Drive on, boys," cried the testy old gentleman; "don't waste any more time with that old idiot!"

"Idiot!" exclaimed the old man with a grin, as he stood in the middle of the road with the gate half-closed, watching the chaise which rapidly diminished in the increasing distance. "No—not much o' that either; you've lost ten minutes here, and gone away as wise as you came, arter all. If every man on the line as has a guinea give him, earns it half as well, you won't catch t'other shay this side Mich'lmas, old short-and-fat." And with another prolonged grin, the old man closed the gate, re-entered his house, and bolted the door after him.

Meanwhile the chaise proceeded, without any slackening of pace, towards the conclusion of the stage. The moon, as Wardle had foretold, was rapidly on the wane; large tiers of dark heavy clouds, which had been gradually overspreading the sky for some time past, now formed one black mass overhead; and large drops of rain which pattered every now and then against the windows of the chaise, seemed to warn the travellers of the rapid approach of a stormy night. The wind,

too, which was directly against them, swept in furious gusts down the narrow road, and howled dismally through the trees which skirted the pathway. Mr. Pickwick drew his coat closer about him, coiled himself more snugly up into the corner of the chaise, and fell into a sound sleep, from which he was only awakened by the stopping of the vehicle, the sound of the hostler's bell, and a loud cry of "Horses on directly!"*

But here another delay occurred. The boys were sleeping with such mysterious soundness, that it took five minutes a-piece to wake them. The hostler had somehow or other mislaid the key of the stable, and even when that was found, two sleepy helpers put the wrong harness on the wrong horses, and the whole process of harnessing had to be gone through afresh. Had Mr. Pickwick been alone, these multiplied obstacles would have completely put an end to the pursuit at once, but old Waddle was not to be so easily daunted; and he laid about him with such hearty good-will, cuffing this man, and pushing that; strapping a buckle here, and taking in a link there, that the chaise was ready in a much shorter time than could reasonably have been expected, under so many difficulties.

They resumed their journey; and certainly the prospect before them was by no means encouraging. The stage was fifteen miles long, the night was dark, the wind high, and the rain pouring in torrents. It was impossible to make any great way against such obstacles united: it was hard upon one o'clock already; and nearly two hours were consumed in getting to the end of the stage. Here, however, an object presented itself, which rekindled their hopes, and re-animated their drooping spirits.

"When did this chaise come in?" cried old Waddle, leaping out of his own vehicle, and pointing to one covered with wet mud, which was standing in the yard.

"Not a quarter of an hour ago, sir;" replied the hostler, to whom the question was addressed.

"Lady and gentleman?" inquired Waddle, almost breathless with impatience.

"Yes, sir."

"Tall gentleman—dress coat—long legs—thin body?"

"Yes, sir."

"Elderly lady—thin face—rather skinny—eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"By heavens, it's the couple, Pickwick," exclaimed the old gentleman.

"Would have been here before," said the hostler, "but they broke a trace."

"It is!" said Wardle, "it is by Jove! Chaise and four instantly! We shall catch them yet, before they reach the next stage. A guinea a-piece, boys—be alive there—bustle about—there's good fellows."

And with such admonitions as these, the old gentleman ran up and down the yard, and bustled to and fro, in a state of excitement which communicated itself to Mr. Pickwick also; and under the influence of which, that gentleman got himself into complicated entanglements with harness, and mixed up with horses and wheels of chaises, in the most surprising manner, firmly believing that by so doing he was materially forwarding the preparations for their resuming their journey.

"Jump in—jump in!" cried old Wardle, climbing into the chaise, pulling up the steps, and slamming the door after him. "Come along! Make haste!" And before Mr. Pickwick knew precisely what he was about, he felt himself forced in at the other door, by one pull from the old gentleman, and one push from the hostler; and off they were again.

"Ah! we *are* moving now," said the old gentleman exultingly. They were indeed, as was sufficiently testified to Mr. Pickwick, by his constant collisions either with the hard wood-work of the chaise, or the body of his companion.

"Hold up!" said the stout old Mr. Wardle, as Mr. Pickwick dived head foremost into his capacious waistcoat.

"I never did feel such a jolting in my life," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Never mind," replied his companion, "it will soon be over. Steady, steady."

Mr. Pickwick planted himself into his own corner, as firmly as he could; and on whirled the chaise faster than ever.

They had travelled in this way about three miles, when Mr. Wardle, who had been looking out of the window for two or three minutes, suddenly drew in his face, covered with splashes, and exclaimed in breathless eagerness—

"Here they are!"

Mr. Pickwick thrust his head out of his window. Yes:

there was a chaise and four, a short distance before them, dashing along at full gallop.

"Go on, go on," almost shrieked the old gentleman. "Two guineas a-piece, boys—don't let 'em gain on us—keep it up—keep it up."

The horses in the first chaise started on at their utmost speed; and those in Mr. Wardle's galloped furiously behind them.

"I see his head," exclaimed the choleric old man. "Damme, I see his head."

"So do I," said Mr. Pickwick, "that's he."

Mr. Pickwick was not mistaken. The countenance of Mr. Jingle, completely coated with the mud thrown up by the wheels, was plainly discernible at the window of his chaise; and the motion of his arm, which he was waving violently towards the postilions, denoted that he was encouraging them to increased exertion.

The interest was intense. Fields, trees, and hedges, seemed to rush past them with the velocity of a whirlwind. so rapid was the pace at which they tore along. They were close by the side of the first chaise. Jingle's voice could be plainly heard, even above the din of the wheels, urging on the boys. Old Mr. Wardle foamed with rage and excitement. He roared out scoundrels and villains by the dozen, clenched his fist and shook it expressively at the object of his indignation; but Mr. Jingle only answered with a contemptuous smile, and replied to his menaces by a shout of triumph, as his horses, answering the increased application of whip and spur, broke into a faster gallop, and left the pursuers behind.

Mr. Pickwick had just drawn in his head, and Mr. Wardle, exhausted with shouting, had done the same, when a tremendous jolt threw them forward against the front of the vehicle. There was a sudden bump—a loud crash—away rolled a wheel, and over went the chaise.

After a very few seconds of bewilderment and confusion, in which nothing but the plunging of horses and breaking of glass could be made out, Mr. Pickwick felt himself violently pulled out from among the ruins of the chaise; and as soon as he had gained his feet, and extricated his head from the skirts of his great coat, which materially impeded the usefulness of his spectacles, the full disaster of the case met his view.

Old Mr. Wardle without a hat, and his clothes torn in several places, stood by his side, and the fragments of the chaise lay scattered at their feet. The post-boys, who had succeeded in cutting the traces, were standing, disfigured with mud and disordered by hard riding, by the horses' heads. About a hundred yards in advance was the other chaise, which had pulled up on hearing the crash. The postilions, each with a broad grin convulsing his countenance, were viewing the adverse party from their saddles, and Mr. Jingle was contemplating the wreck from the coach-window, with evident satisfaction. The day was just breaking, and the whole scene was rendered perfectly visible by the grey light of the morning.

"Hallo!" shouted the shameless Jingle, "anybody damaged?—elderly gentlemen—no light weights—dangerous work—very."

"You're a rascal!" roared Wardle.

"Ha! ha!" replied Jingle; and then he added, with a knowing wink, and a jerk of the thumb towards the interior of the chaise—"I say—she's very well—desires her compliments—begs you won't trouble yourself—love to *Tuppy*—won't you get up behind?—drive on, boys."

The postilions resumed their proper attitudes, and away rattled the chaise, Mr. Jingle fluttering in derision a white handkerchief from the coach-window.

Nothing in the whole adventure, not even the upset, had disturbed the calm and equable current of Mr. Pickwick's temper. The villany, however, which could first borrow money of his faithful follower, and then abbreviate his name to "*Tuppy*," was more than he could patiently bear. He drew his breath hard, and coloured up to the very tips of his spectacles, as he said, slowly and emphatically—

"If ever I meet that man again, I'll——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Wardle, "that's all very well: but while we stand talking here, they'll get their licence, and be married in London."

Mr. Pickwick paused, bottled up his vengeance, and corked it down.

"How far is it to the next stage?" inquired Mr. Wardle, of one of the boys.

"Six mile, an't it, Tom?"

"Rayther better."

"Rayther better nor six mile, sir."



THE BREAK-DOWN

"Can't be helped," said Wardle, "we must walk it, Pickwick."

"No help for it," replied that truly great man.

So sending forward one of the boys on horseback, to procure a fresh chaise and horses, and leaving the other behind to take care of the broken one Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Wardle set manfully forward on the walk, first tying their shawls round their necks, and slouching down their hats to escape as much as possible from the deluge of rain, which after a slight cessation had again begun to pour heavily down.

CHAPTER X

CLEARING UP ALL DOUBTS (IF ANY EXISTED) OF THE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF MR. JINGLE'S CHARACTER

THERE are in London several old inns, once the head-quarters of celebrated coaches in the days when coaches performed their journeys in a graver and more solemn manner than they do in these times; but which have now degenerated into little more than the abiding and booking places of country waggons. The reader would look in vain for any of these ancient hostelries, among the Golden Crosses and Bull and Mouths, which rear their stately fronts in the improved streets of London. If he would light upon any of these old places, he must direct his steps to the obscurer quarters of the town; and there in some secluded nooks he will find several, still standing with a kind of gloomy sturdiness, amidst the modern innovations which surround them.

In the Borough especially, there still remain some half dozen old inns, which have preserved their external features unchanged, and which have escaped alike the rage for public improvement, and the encroachments of private speculation. Great, rambling, queer, old places they are, with galleries, and passages, and staircases, wide enough and antiquated enough to furnish materials for a hundred ghost stories, supposing we should ever be reduced to the lamentable necessity of inventing any, and that the world should exist long enough to exhaust the innumerable veracious legends connected with old London Bridge, and its adjacent neighbourhood on the Surrey side.

It was in the yard of one of these inns—of no less celebrated a one than the White Hart—that a man was busily employed in brushing the dirt off a pair of boots, early on the morning succeeding the events narrated in the last chapter. He was habited in a coarse-striped waistcoat, with black calico sleeves, and blue glass buttons; drab

breeches and leggings. A bright red handkerchief was wound in a very loose and unstudied style round his neck, and an old white hat was carelessly thrown on one side of his head. There were two rows of boots before him, one cleaned and the other dirty, and at every addition he made to the clean row, he paused from his work, and contemplated its results with evident satisfaction.

The yard presented none of that bustle and activity which are the usual characteristics of a large coach inn. Three or four lumbering waggons, each with a pile of goods beneath its ample canopy, about the height of the second-floor window of an ordinary house, were stowed away beneath a lofty roof which extended over one end of the yard; and another, which was probably to commence its journey that morning, was drawn out into the open space. A double tier of bedroom galleries, with old clumsy balustrades, ran round two sides of the straggling area, and a double row of bells to correspond, sheltered from the weather by a little sloping roof, hung over the door leading to the bar and coffee-room. Two or three gigs and chaise-carts were wheeled up under different little sheds and pent-houses; and the occasional heavy tread of a cart-horse, or rattling of a chain at the further end of the yard, announced to anybody who cared about the matter, that the stable lay in that direction. When we add that a few boys in smock frocks were lying asleep on heavy packages, woolpacks, and other articles that were scattered about on heaps of straw, we have described as fully as need be the general appearance of the yard of the White Hart Inn, High Street, Borough, on the particular morning in question.

A loud ringing of one of the bells, was followed by the appearance of a smart chambermaid in the upper sleeping gallery, who, after tapping at one of the doors, and receiving a request from within, called over the balustrades—

“Sam!”

“Hallo,” replied the man with the white hat.

“Number twenty-two wants his boots.”

“Ask number twenty-two, wether he’ll have ’em now, or wait till he gets ’em,” was the reply.

“Come, don’t be a fool, Sam,” said the girl, coaxingly. “the gentleman wants his boots directly.”

“Well, you *are* a nice young ’ooman for a musical party, you are,” said the boot-cleaner. “Look at these here boots

—eleven pair o' boots; and one shoe as b'longs to number six, with the wooden leg. The eleven boots is to be called at half-past eight and the shoe at nine. Who's number twenty-two, that's to put all the others out? No, no; reg'lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said, wen he tied the men up. Sorry to keep you a waitin', sir, but I'll attend to you directly."

Saying which, the man in the white hat set to work upon a top-boot with increased assiduity.

There was another loud ring; and the bustling old landlady of the White Hart made her appearance in the opposite gallery.

"Sam," cried the landlady, "where's that lazy, idle—why, Sam—oh, there you are; why don't you answer?"

"Wouldn't be gen-teel to answer, 'till you'd done talking," replied Sam, gruffly.

"Here, clean them shoes for number seventeen directly, and take 'em to private sitting-room, number five, first floor."

The landlady flung a pair of lady's shoes into the yard, and bustled away.

"Number 5," said Sam, as he picked up the shoes, and taking a piece of chalk from his pocket, made a memorandum of their destination on the soles—"Lady's shoes and private sittin'-room! I suppose *she* didn't come in the waggin."

"She came in early this morning," cried the girl, who was still leaning over the railing of the gallery, "with a gentleman in a hackney-coach, and it's him as wants his boots, and you'd better do 'em, that's all about it."

"Vy didn't you say so before?" said Sam, with great indignation, singling out the boots in question from the heap before him. "For all I know'd he vas one o' the regular three-pennies. Private room! and a lady too! If he's anything of a gen'lm'n, he's vorth a shillin' a day, let alone the arrands."

Stimulated by this inspiring reflection, Mr. Samuel brushed away with such hearty good will, that in a few minutes the boots and shoes, with a polish which would have struck envy to the soul of the amiable Mr. Warren (for they used Day and Martin at the White Hart), had arrived at the door of number five.

"Come in," said a man's voice, in reply to Sam's rap at the door.

Sam made his best bow, and stepped into the presence of a lady and gentleman seated at breakfast. Having officiously

deposited the gentleman's boots right and left at his feet, and the lady's shoes right and left at hers, he backed towards the door.

"Boots," said the gentleman.

"Sir," said Sam, closing the door, and keeping his hand on the knob of the lock.

"Do you know—what's a-name—Doctors' Commons?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

"Paul's Church-yard, sir; low archway on the carriage-side, bookseller's at one corner, hotel on the other, and two porters in the middle as touts for licences."

"Touts for licences!" said the gentleman.

"Touts for licences," replied Sam. "Two coves in white aprons—touches their hats when you walk in—'Licence, sir, licence?' Queer sort, them, and their mas'rs too, sir—Old Baily Proctors—and no mistake."

"What do they do?" inquired the gentleman.

"Do! *You*, sir! That a'nt the wost on it, neither. They puts things into old gen'lm'n's heads as they never dreamed of. My father, sir, was a coachman. A widower he wos, and fat enough for anything—uncommon fat, to be sure. His missus dies, and leaves him four hundred pound. Down he goes to the Commons, to see the lawyer and draw the blunt—very smart—top-boots on—nosegay in his button-hole—broad-brimmed tile—green shawl—quite the gen'lm'n. Goes through the archway, thinking how he should invest the money—up comes the touter, touches his hat—'Licence, sir, licence?'—'What's that?' says my father.—'Licence, sir,' says he.—'What licence?' says my father.—'Marriage licence,' says the touter.—'Dash my veskit,' says my father, 'I never thought o' that.'—'I think you wants one, sir,' says the touter. My father pulls up, and thinks abit—'No,' says he, 'damme, I'm too old, b'sides I'm a many sizes too large,' says he.—'Not a bit on it, sir,' says the touter.—'Think not?' says my father.—'I'm sure not,' says he; 'we married a gen'lm'n twice your size, last Monday.'—'Did you, though,' said my father.—'To be sure we did,' says the touter, 'you're a babby to him—this way, sir—this way!'—and sure enough my father walks arter him, like a tame monkey behind a horgan, into a little back office, vere a feller sat among dirty papers and tin boxes, making believe he was busy. 'Pray take a seat, vile I makes out the affidavit, sir,' says the lawyer.

—‘Thankee,’ sir, says my father, and down he sat, and stared with all his eyes, and his mouth wide open, at the names on the boxes. ‘What’s your name, sir,’ says the lawyer.—‘Tony Weller,’ says my father.—‘Parish?’ says the lawyer.—‘Belle Savage,’ says my father; for he stopped there wen he drove up, and he know’d nothing about parishes, *he* didn’t.—‘And what’s the lady’s name?’ says the lawyer. My father was struck all of a heap. ‘Blessed if I know,’ says he.—‘Not know!’ says the lawyer.—‘No more nor you do,’ says my father, ‘can’t I put that in arterwards?’—‘Impossible!’ says the lawyer.—‘Wery well,’ says my father, after he’d thought a moment, ‘put down Mrs. Clarke.’—‘What Clarke?’ says the lawyer, dipping his pen in the ink.—‘Susan Clarke, Markis o’ Granby, Dorking,’ says my father; ‘she’ll have me, if I ask, I des-say—I never said nothing to her, but she’ll have me, I know.’ The licence was made out, and she *did* have him, and what’s more she’s got him now; and *I* never had any of the four hundred pound, worse luck. Beg your pardon, sir,” said Sam, when he had concluded, “but wen I gets on this here grievance, I runs on like a new barrow vith the wheel greased.” Having said which, and having paused for an instant to see whether he was wanted for anything more, Sam left the room.

“Half-past nine—just the time—off at once;” said the gentleman, whom we need hardly introduce as Mr. Jingle.

“Time—for what?” said the spinster aunt, coquettishly.

“Licence, dearest of angels—give notice at the church—call you mine, to-morrow”—said Mr. Jingle, and he squeezed the spinster aunt’s hand.

“The licence!” said Rachael, blushing.

“The licence,” repeated Mr. Jingle—

“In hurry, post-haste for a licence,
In hurry, ding dong I come back.”

“How you run on,” said Rachael.

“Run on—nothing to the hours, days, weeks, months, years, when we’re united—*run* on—they’ll fly on—bolt—mizzle—steam-engine—thousand-horse power—nothing to it.”

“Can’t—can’t we be married before to-morrow morning?” inquired Rachael.

“Impossible—can’t be—notice at the church—leave the licence to-day—ceremony come off to-morrow.”

"I am so terrified, lest my brother should discover us!" said Rachael.

"Discover—nonsense—too much shaken by the breakdown—besides—extreme caution—gave up the post-chaise—walked on—took a hackney coach—came to the Borough—last place in the world that he'd look in—ha! ha!—capital notion that—very."

"Don't be long," said the spinster, affectionately, as Mr. Jingle stuck the pinched-up hat on his head.

"Long away from *you*?—(ruel charmer," and Mr. Jingle skipped playfully up to the spinster aunt, imprinted a chaste kiss upon her lips, and danced out of the room.

"Dear man!" said the spinster as the door closed after him.

"Rum old girl," said Mr. Jingle, as he walked down the passage.

It is painful to reflect upon the perfidy of our species; and we will not, therefore, pursue the thread of Mr. Jingle's meditations, as he wended his way to Doctors' Commons. It will be sufficient for our purpose to relate, that escaping the snares of the dragons in white aprons, who guard the entrance to that enchanted region, he reached the Vicar General's office in safety, and having procured a highly flattering address on parchment, from the Archbishop of Canterbury, to his "trusty and well-beloved Alfred Jingle and Rachael Wardle, greeting," he carefully deposited the mystic document in his pocket, and retraced his steps in triumph to the Borough.

He was yet on his way to the White Hart, when two plump gentlemen and one thin one entered the yard, and looked round in search of some authorised person of whom they could make a few inquiries. Mr. Samuel Weller happened to be at that moment engaged in burnishing a pair of painted tops, the personal property of a farmer who was refreshing himself with a slight lunch of two or three pounds of cold beef and a pot or two of porter, after the fatigues of the Borough market; and to him the thin gentleman straightway advanced.

"My friend," said the thin gentleman.

"You're one o' the advice gratis order," thought Sam, "or you wouldn't be so werry fond o' me all at once." But he only said—"Well, sir."

"My friend," said the thin gentleman, with a conciliatory

hem—"Have you got many people stopping here, now? Pretty busy. Eh?"

Sam stole a look at the inquirer. He was a little high-dried man, with a dark squeezed-up face, and small restless black eyes, that kept winking and twinkling on each side of his little inquisitive nose, as if they were playing a perpetual game of peep-bo with that feature. He was dressed all in black, with boots as shiny as his eyes, a low white neckcloth, and a clean shirt with a frill to it. A gold watch-chain, and seals, depended from his fob. He carried his black kid gloves *in* his hands, not *on* them; and as he spoke, thrust his wrists beneath his coat-tails, with the air of a man who was in the habit of propounding some regular posers.

"Pretty busy, eh?" said the little man.

"Oh, werry well, sir," replied Sam, "we shan't be bankrupts, and we shan't make our fort'ns. We eats our biled mutton without capers, and don't care for horse-radish wen we can get beef."

"Ah," said the little man, "you're a wag, a'nt you?"

"My eldest brother was troubled with that complaint," said Sam; "it may be catching—I used to sleep with him."

"This is a curious old house of yours," said the little man, looking round him.

"If you'd sent word you was a coming, we'd ha' had it repaired;" replied the imperturbable Sam.

The little man seemed rather baffled by these several repulses, and a short consultation took place between him and the two plump gentlemen. At its conclusion, the little man took a pinch of snuff from an oblong silver box, and was apparently on the point of renewing the conversation, when one of the plump gentlemen, who in addition to a benevolent countenance, possessed a pair of spectacles, and a pair of black gaiters, interfered—

"The fact of the matter is," said the benevolent gentleman, "that my friend here (pointing to the other plump gentleman) will give you half a guinea, if you'll answer one or two—"

"Now, my dear sir—my dear sir," said the little man, "pray, allow me—my dear sir, the very first principle to be observed in these cases, is this: if you place a matter in the hands of a professional man, you must in no way interfere in the progress of the business; you must repose implicit



FIRST APPEARANCE OF MR SAMUEL WELLER

confidence in him. Really, Mr. (he turned to the other plump gentleman, and said)—I forget your friend's name."

"Pickwick," said Mr. Wardle, for it was no other than that jolly personage.

"Ah, Pickwick—really Mr. Pickwick, my dear sir, excuse me—I shall be happy to receive any private suggestions of yours, as *amicus curiæ*, but you must see the impropriety of your interfering with my conduct in this case, with such an *ad captandum* argument as the offer of half a guinea. Really, my dear sir, really;" and the little man took an argumentative pinch of snuff, and looked very profound.

"My only wish, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "was to bring this very unpleasant matter to as speedy a close as possible."

"Quite right—quite right" said the little man.

"With which view," continued Mr. Pickwick, "I made use of the argument which my experience of men has taught me is the most likely to succeed in any case."

"Ay, ay," said the little man, "very good, very good, indeed; but you should have suggested it to *me*. My dear sir, I'm quite certain you cannot be ignorant of the extent of confidence which must be placed in professional men. If any authority can be necessary on such a point, my dear sir, let me refer you to the well-known case in *Barnwell* and—"

"Never mind *George Barnwell*," interrupted Sam, who had remained a wondering listener during this short colloquy; "every body knows what sort of a case his was, tho' it's always been my opinion, mind you, that the young 'ooman deserved scragging a precious sight more than he did. Hows'ever, that's neither here nor there. You want me to except of half a guinea. Werry well, I'm agreeable: I can't say no fairer than that, can I, sir? (Mr. Pickwick smiled.) Then the next question is, what the devil do you want with me, as the man said wen he see the ghost?"

"We want to know—" said Mr. Wardle.

"Now, my dear sir—my dear sir," interposed the busy little man.

Mr. Wardle shrugged his shoulders, and was silent.

"We want to know," said the little man, solemnly; "and we ask the question of you, in order that we may not awaken apprehensions inside—we want to know who you've got in this house, at present?"

"Who there is in the house!" said Sam, in whose mind

the inmates were always represented by that particular article of their costume, which came under his immediate superintendence. "There's a wooden leg in number six; there's a pair of Hessians in thirteen; there's two pair of halves in the commercial; there's these here painted tops in the snuggerly inside the bar; and five more tops in the coffee-room."

"Nothing more?" said the little man.

"Stop a bit," replied Sam, suddenly recollecting himself. "Yes; there's a pair of Wellingtons a good deal worn, and a pair o' lady's shoes, in number five."

"What sort of shoes?" hastily inquired Wardle, who, together with Mr. Pickwick, had been lost in bewilderment at the singular catalogue of visitors.

"Country make," replied Sam.

"Any maker's name?"

"Brown."

"Where of?"

"Muggleton."

"It is them," exclaimed Wardle. "By Heavens, we've found them."

"Hush!" said Sam. "The Wellingtons has gone to Doctors' Commons."

"No," said the little man.

"Yes, for a licence."

"We're in time," exclaimed Wardle. "Show us the room; not a moment is to be lost."

"Pray, my dear sir—pray," said the little man; "caution, caution." He drew from his pocket a red silk purse, and looked very hard at Sam as he drew out a sovereign.

Sam grinned expressively.

"Show us into the room at once, without announcing us," said the little man, "and it's yours."

Sam threw the painted tops into a corner, and led the way through a dark passage, and up a wide staircase. He paused at the end of a second passage, and held out his hand.

"Here it is," whispered the attorney, as he deposited the money in the hand of their guide.

The man stepped forward for a few paces, followed by the two friends and their legal adviser. He stopped at a door.

"Is this the room?" murmured the little gentleman.

Sam nodded assent.

Old Wardle opened the door ; and the whole three walked into the room just as Mr. Jingle, who had that moment returned, had produced the licence to the spinster aunt.

The spinster uttered a loud shriek, and, throwing herself in a chair, covered her face with her hands. Mr. Jingle crumpled up the licence, and thrust it into his coat-pocket. The unwelcome visitors advanced into the middle of the room.

"You—you are a nice rascal, arn't you?" exclaimed Wardle, breathless with passion.

"My dear sir, my dear sir," said the little man, laying his hat on the table. "Pray, consider—pray. Defamation of character: action for damages. Calm yourself, my dear sir, pray—"

"How dare you drag my sister from my house?" said the old man.

"Ay—ay—very good," said the little gentleman, "you may ask that. How dare you, sir?—eh, sir?"

"Who the devil are you?" inquired Mr. Jingle, in so fierce a tone, that the little gentleman involuntarily fell back a step or two.

"Who is he, you scoundrel," interposed Wardle. "He's my lawyer, Mr. Perker, of Gray's Inn. Perker, I'll have this fellow prosecuted—indicted—I'll—I'll—I'll ruin him. And you," continued Mr. Wardle, turning abruptly round to his sister, "you, Rachael, at a time of life when you ought to know better, what do *you* mean by running away with a vagabond, disgracing your family, and making yourself miserable. Get on your bonnet, and come back. Call a hackney-coach there, directly, and bring this lady's bill, d'ye hear—d'ye hear?"

"Cert'nly, sir," replied Sam, who had answered Wardle's violent ringing of the bell with a degree of celerity which must have appeared marvellous to anybody who didn't know that his eye had been applied to the outside of the keyhole during the whole interview.

"Get on your bonnet," repeated Wardle.

"Do nothing of the kind," said Jingle. "Leave the room, sir—no business here—lady's free to act as she pleases—more than one-and-twenty."

"More than one-and-twenty!" ejaculated Wardle, contemptuously. "More than one-and-forty!"

"I a'nt," said the spinster aunt, her indignation getting the better of her determination to faint.

"You are," replied Wardle, "you're fifty if you're an hour."

Here the spinster aunt uttered a loud shriek, and became senseless.

"A glass of water," said the humane Mr. Pickwick, summoning the landlady.

"A *glass* of water!" said the passionate Wardle. "Bring a bucket, and throw it all over her; it'll do her good, and she richly deserves it."

"Ugh, you brute!" ejaculated the kind-hearted landlady. "Poor dear." And with sundry ejaculations, of "Come now, there's a dear—drink a little of this—it'll do you good—don't give way so—there's a love," &c., &c., the landlady, assisted by a chamber-maid, proceeded to vinegar the forehead, beat the hands, titillate the nose, and unlace the stays of the spinster aunt, and to administer such other restoratives as are usually applied by compassionate females to ladies who are endeavouring to ferment themselves into hysterics.

"Coach is ready, sir," said Sam, appearing at the door.

"Come along," cried Wardle. "I'll carry her down stairs."

At this proposition, the hysterics came on with redoubled violence.

The landlady was about to enter a very violent protest against this proceeding, and had already given vent to an indignant inquiry whether Mr. Wardle considered himself a lord of the creation, when Mr. Jingle interposed—

"Boots," said he, "get me an officer."

"Stay, stay," said little Mr. Perker. "Consider, sir, consider."

"I'll *not* consider," replied Jingle. "She's her own mistress—see who dares to take her away—unless she wishes it."

"I *won't* be taken away," murmured the spinster aunt. "I *don't* wish it." (Here there was a frightful relapse.)

"My dear sir," said the little man, in a low tone, taking Mr. Wardle and Mr. Pickwick apart: "My dear sir, we're in a very awkward situation. It's a distressing case—very; I never knew one more so; but really, my dear sir, really we have no power to control this lady's actions. I warned you before we came, my dear sir, that there was nothing to look to but a compromise."

There was a short pause.

"What kind of compromise would you recommend?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, my dear sir, our friend's in an unpleasant position—very much so. We must be content to suffer some pecuniary loss."

"I'll suffer any, rather than submit to this disgrace, and let her, fool as she is, be made miserable for life," said Wardle.

"I rather think it can be done," said the bustling little man. "Mr. Jingle, will you step with us into the next room for a moment?"

Mr. Jingle assented, and the quartette walked into an empty apartment.

"Now, sir," said the little man, as he carefully closed the door, "is there no way of accommodating this matter—step this way, sir, for a moment—into this window, sir, where we can be alone—there, sir, there pray sit down, sir. Now, my dear sir, between you and I, we know very well, my dear sir, that you have run off with this lady for the sake of her money. Don't frown, sir, don't frown; I say, between you and I, *we* know it. We are both men of the world, and *we* know very well that our friends here, are not—eh?"

Mr. Jingle's face gradually relaxed; and something distantly resembling a wink quivered for an instant in his left eye.

"Very good, very good," said the little man, observing the impression he had made. "Now the fact is, that beyond a few hundreds, the lady has little or nothing till the death of her mother—fine old lady, my dear sir."

"*Old*," said Mr. Jingle, briefly but emphatically.

"Why, yes," said the attorney with a slight cough. "You are right, my dear sir, she is *rather* old. She comes of an old family though, my dear sir; old in every sense of the word. The founder of that family came into Kent, when Julius Cæsar invaded Britain;—only one member of it, since, who hasn't lived to eighty-five, and *he* was beheaded by one of the Henrys. The old lady is not seventy-three now, my dear sir." The little man paused, and took a pinch of snuff.

"Well," cried Mr. Jingle.

"Well, my dear sir—you don't take snuff!—ah! so much the better—expensive habit—well, my dear sir, you're a fine young man, man of the world—able to push your fortune, if you had capital, eh?"

"Well," said Mr. Jingle again.

"Do you comprehend me?"

"Not quite."

"Don't you think—now, my dear sir, I put it to you, *don't* you think—that fifty pounds and liberty, would be better than Miss Wardle and expectation?"

"Won't do—not half enough!" said Mr. Jingle rising.

"Nay, nay, my dear sir," remonstrated the little attorney, seizing him by the button. "Good round sum—a man like you could treble it in no time—great deal to be done with fifty pounds, my dear sir."

"More to be done with a hundred and fifty," replied Mr. Jingle, coolly.

"Well, my dear sir, we won't waste time in splitting straws," resumed the little man, "say—say—seventy."

"Won't do," said Mr. Jingle.

"Don't go away, my dear sir—pray don't hurry," said the little man. "Eighty; come: I'll write you a cheque at once."

"Won't do," said Mr. Jingle.

"Well, my dear sir, well," said the little man, still detaining him; "just tell me what *will* do."

"Expensive affair," said Mr. Jingle. "Money out of pocket—posting, nine pounds; licence, three—that's twelve—compensation, a hundred—hundred and twelve—Breach of honour—and loss of the lady——"

"Yes, my dear sir, yes," said the little man, with a knowing look, "never mind the last two items. That's a hundred and twelve—say a hundred—come."

"And twenty," said Mr. Jingle.

"Come, come, I'll write you a cheque," said the little man; and down he sat at the table for that purpose.

"I'll make it payable the day after to-morrow," said the little man, with a look towards Mr. Wardle; "and we can get the lady away, meanwhile." Mr. Wardle sullenly nodded assent.

"A hundred," said the little man.

"And twenty," said Mr. Jingle.

"My dear sir," remonstrated the little man.

"Give it him," interposed Mr. Wardle, "and let him go."

The cheque was written by the little gentleman, and pocketed by Mr. Jingle.

"Now, leave this house instantly!" said Wardle, starting up.

"My dear sir," urged the little man.

"And mind," said Mr. Wardle, "that nothing should have induced me to make this compromise—not even a regard for my family—if I had not known that the moment you got any money in that pocket of yours, you'd go to the devil faster, if possible, than you would without it——"

"My dear sir," urged the little man again.

"Be quiet, Perker," resumed Wardle. "Leave the room, sir."

"Off directly," said the unabashed Jingle. "Bye bye, Pickwick."

If any dispassionate spectator could have beheld the countenance of the illustrious man, whose name forms the leading feature of the title of this work, during the latter part of this conversation, he would have been almost induced to wonder that the indignant fire which flashed from his eyes, did not melt the glasses of his spectacles—so majestic was his wrath. His nostrils dilated, and his fists clenched involuntarily, as he heard himself addressed by the villain. But he restrained himself again—he did *not* pulverise him.

"Here," continued the hardened traitor, tossing the licence at Mr. Pickwick's feet; "get the name altered—take home the lady—do for Tuppy."

Mr. Pickwick was a philosopher, but philosophers are only men in armour, after all. The shaft had reached him, penetrated through his philosophical harness, to his very heart. In the frenzy of his rage he hurled the inkstand madly forward, and followed it up himself. But Mr. Jingle had disappeared, and he found himself caught in the arms of Sam.

"Hallo," said that eccentric functionary, "furniter's cheap where you come from, sir. Self-acting ink, that 'ere; it's wrote your mark upon the wall, old gen'lm'n. Hold still, sir; wot's the use o' runnin' arter a man as has made his lucky, and got to t' other end of the Borough by this time."

Mr. Pickwick's mind, like those of all truly great men, was open to conviction. He was a quick and powerful reasoner; and a moment's reflection sufficed to remind him of the impotency of his rage. It subsided as quickly as it had been roused. He panted for breath, and looked benignantly round upon his friends.

Shall we tell the lamentations that ensued, when Miss Wardle found herself deserted by the faithless Jingle? Shall we extract Mr. Pickwick's masterly description of that heart-rending scene? His note-book, blotted with the tears of

sympathising humanity, lies open before us ; one word, and it is in the printer's hands. But, no ! we will be resolute ! We will not wring the public bosom, with the delineation of such suffering !

Slowly and sadly did the two friends and the deserted lady, return next day in the Muggleton heavy coach. Dimly and darkly had the sombre shadows of a summer's night fallen upon all around, when they again reached Dingley Dell, and stood within the entrance to Manor Farm.

CHAPTER XI

INVOLVING ANOTHER JOURNEY, AND AN ANTIQUARIAN DISCOVERY. RECORDING MR. PICKWICK'S DETERMINATION TO BE PRESENT AT AN LECTURE

A NIGHT of quiet and repose in the profound silence of Dingley Dell, and an hour's breathing of its fresh and fragrant air on the ensuing morning, completely recovered Mr. Pickwick from the effects of his late fatigue of body and anxiety of mind. That illustrious man had been separated from his friends and followers, for two whole days; and it was with a degree of pleasure and delight, which no common imagination can adequately conceive, that he stepped forward to greet Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass, as he encountered those gentlemen on his return from his early walk. The pleasure was mutual; for who could ever gaze on Mr. Pickwick's beaming face without experiencing the sensation? But still a cloud seemed to hang over his companions which that great man could not but be sensible of, and was wholly at a loss to account for. There was a mysterious air about them both, as unusual as it was alarming.

"And how," said Mr. Pickwick, when he had grasped his followers by the hand, and exchanged warm salutations of welcome; "how is Tupman?"

Mr. Winkle, to whom the question was more peculiarly addressed, made no reply. He turned away his head, and appeared absorbed in melancholy reflections.

"Snodgrass," said Mr. Pickwick, earnestly, "How is our friend—he is not ill?"

"No," replied Mr. Snodgrass; and a tear trembled on his sentimental eye-lid, like a rain-drop on a window-frame. "No; he is not ill."

Mr. Pickwick stopped, and gazed on each of his friends in turn.

"Winkle—Snodgrass," said Mr. Pickwick: "what does this mean? Where is our friend? What has happened? Speak—I conjure, I entreat—nay, I command you, speak."

There was a solemnity—a dignity—in Mr. Pickwick's manner, not to be withstood.

"He is gone," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Gone!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick. "Gone!"

"Gone," repeated Mr. Snodgrass.

"Where!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick.

"We can only guess, from that communication," replied Mr. Snodgrass, taking a letter from his pocket, and placing it in his friend's hand. "Yesterday morning, when a letter was received from Mr. Wardle, stating that you would be home with his sister at night, the melancholy which had hung over our friend during the whole of the previous day, was observed to increase. He shortly afterwards disappeared: he was missing during the whole day, and in the evening this letter was brought by the hostler from the Crown, at Muggleton. It had been left in his charge in the morning, with a strict injunction that it should not be delivered until night."

Mr. Pickwick opened the epistle. It was in his friend's handwriting, and these were its contents:—

"My dear Pickwick,

"You, my dear friend, are placed far beyond the reach of many mortal frailties and weaknesses which ordinary people cannot overcome. You do not know what it is, at one blow, to be deserted by a lovely and fascinating creature, and to fall a victim to the artifices of a villain, who hid the grin of cunning, beneath the mask of friendship. I hope you never may.

"Any letter, addressed to me at the Leather Bottle, Cobham, Kent, will be forwarded—supposing I still exist. I hasten from the sight of that world, which has become odious to me. Should I hasten from it altogether, pity—forgive me. Life, my dear Pickwick, has become insupportable to me. The spirit which burns within us, is a porter's knot, on which to rest the heavy load of worldly cares and troubles; and when that spirit fails us, the burden is too heavy to be borne. We sink beneath it. You may tell Rachael—Ah, that name!—

"TRACY TUPMAN."

"We must leave this place, directly," said Mr. Pickwick, as he refolded the note. "It would not have been decent for us to remain here, under any circumstances, after what has happened; and now we are bound to follow in search of our friend." And so saying, he led the way to the house.

His intention was rapidly communicated. The entreaties to remain were pressing, but Mr. Pickwick was inflexible. Business, he said, required his immediate attendance.

The old clergyman was present.

"You are not really going?" said he, taking Mr. Pickwick aside.

Mr. Pickwick reiterated his former determination.

"Then here," said the old gentleman, "is a little manuscript, which I had hoped to have the pleasure of reading to you myself. I found it on the death of a friend of mine—a medical man, engaged in our County Lunatic Asylum—among a variety of papers which I had the option of destroying or preserving, as I thought proper. I can hardly believe that the manuscript is genuine, though it certainly is not in my friend's hand. However, whether it be the genuine production of a maniac, or founded upon the ravings of some unhappy being (which I think more probable), read it, and judge for yourself."

Mr. Pickwick received the manuscript, and parted from the benevolent old gentleman with many expressions of good-will and esteem.

It was a more difficult task to take leave of the inmates of Manor Farm, from whom they had received so much hospitality and kindness. Mr. Pickwick kissed the young ladies—we were going to say, as if they were his own daughters, only as he might possibly have infused a little more warmth into the salutation, the comparison would not be quite appropriate—hugged the old lady with filial cordiality: and patted the rosy cheeks of the female servants in a most patriarchal manner, as he slipped into the hands of each, some more substantial expression of his approval. The exchange of cordialities with their fine old host and Mr. Trundle, were even more hearty and prolonged; and it was not until Mr. Snodgrass had been several times called for, and at last emerged from a dark passage followed soon after by Emily (whose bright eyes looked unusually dim), that the three friends were enabled to tear themselves from their friendly entertainers. Many a backward look they gave at the Farm,

as they walked slowly away: and many a kiss did Mr. Snodgrass waft in the air, in acknowledgment of something very like a lady's handkerchief, which was waved from one of the upper windows, until a turn of the lane hid the old house from their sight.

At Muggleton they procured a conveyance to Rochester. By the time they reached the last-named place, the violence of their grief had sufficiently abated to admit of their making a very excellent early dinner; and having procured the necessary information relative to the road, the three friends set forward again in the afternoon to walk to Cobham.

A delightful walk it was: for it was a pleasant afternoon in June, and their way lay through a deep and shady wood, cooled by the light wind which gently rustled the thick foliage, and enlivened by the songs of the birds that perched upon the boughs. The ivy and the moss crept in thick clusters over the old trees, and the soft green turf overspread the ground like a silken mat. They emerged upon an open park, with an ancient hall, displaying the quaint and picturesque architecture of Elizabeth's time. Long vistas of stately oaks and elm trees appeared on every side: large herds of deer were cropping the fresh grass; and occasionally a startled hare scoured along the ground, with the speed of the shadows thrown by the light clouds which swept across a sunny landscape like a passing breath of summer.

"If this," said Mr. Pickwick, looking about him, "if this were the place to which all who are troubled with our friend's complaint came, I fancy their old attachment to this world would very soon return."

"I think so too," said Mr. Winkle.

"And really," added Mr. Pickwick, after half an hour's walking had brought them to the village, "really, for a misanthrope's choice, this is one of the prettiest and most desirable places of residence I ever met with."

In this opinion also, both Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass expressed their concurrence; and having been directed to the Leathern Bottle, a clean and commodious village ale-house, the three travellers entered, and at once inquired for a gentleman of the name of Tupman.

"Show the gentlemen into the parlour, Tom," said the landlady.

A stout country lad opened a door at the end of the passage, and the three friends entered a long, low-roofed

room, furnished with a large number of high-backed leather-cushioned chairs of fantastic shapes, and embellished with a great variety of old portraits and roughly-coloured prints of some antiquity. At the upper end of the room was a table, with a white cloth upon it, well covered with a roast fowl, bacon, ale, and *et ceteras*; and at the table sat Mr. Tupman, looking as unlike a man who had taken his leave of the world, as possible.

On the entrance of his friends, that gentleman laid down his knife and fork, and with a mournful air advanced to meet them.

"I did not expect to see you here," he said, as he grasped Mr. Pickwick's hand. "It's very kind."

"Ah!" said Mr. Pickwick, sitting down, and wiping from his forehead the perspiration which the walk had engendered. "Finish your dinner, and walk out with me. I wish to speak to you alone."

Mr. Tupman did as he was desired; and Mr. Pickwick having refreshed himself with a copious draught of ale, waited his friend's leisure. The dinner was quickly despatched, and they walked out together.

For half an hour, their forms might have been seen pacing the churchyard to and fro, while Mr. Pickwick was engaged in combatting his companion's resolution. Any repetition of his arguments would be useless; for what language could convey to them that energy and force which their great originator's manner communicated? Whether Mr. Tupman was already tired of retirement, or whether he was wholly unable to resist the eloquent appeal which was made to him, matters not, he did *not* resist it at last.

"It mattered little to him," he said, "where he dragged out the miserable remainder of his days: and since his friend laid so much stress upon his humble companionship, he was willing to share his adventures."

Mr. Pickwick smiled; they shook hands; and walked back to re-join their companions.

It was at this moment that Mr. Pickwick made that immortal discovery, which has been the pride and boast of his friends, and the envy of every antiquarian in this or any other country. They had passed the door of their inn, and walked a little way down the village, before they recollected the precise spot in which it stood. As they turned back, Mr. Pickwick's eye fell upon a small broken stone, partially

buried in the ground, in front of a cottage door. He paused.

"This is very strange," said Mr. Pickwick.

"What is strange?" inquired Mr. Tupman, staring eagerly at every object near him, but the right one. "God bless me, what's the matter?"

This last was an ejaculation of irrepressible astonishment, occasioned by seeing Mr. Pickwick, in his enthusiasm for discovery, fall on his knees before the little stone, and commence wiping the dust off it with his pocket-handkerchief.

"There is an inscription here," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Is it possible?" said Mr. Tupman.

"I can discern," continued Mr. Pickwick, rubbing away with all his might, and gazing intently through his spectacles: "I can discern a cross, and a B, and then a T. This is important," continued Mr. Pickwick, starting up. "This is some very old inscription, existing perhaps long before the ancient alms-houses in this place. It must not be lost."

He tapped at the cottage door. A labouring man opened it.

"Do you know how this stone came here, my friend?" inquired the benevolent Mr. Pickwick.

"No, I doan't, sir," replied the man civilly. "It was here long afore I war born, or any on us."

Mr. Pickwick glanced triumphantly at his companion.

"You—you—are not particularly attached to it, I dare say," said Mr. Pickwick, trembling with anxiety. "You wouldn't mind selling it, now?"

"Ah! but who'd buy it?" inquired the man, with an expression of face which he probably meant to be very cunning.

"I'll give you ten shillings for it, at once," said Mr. Pickwick, "if you would take it up for me."

The astonishment of the village may be easily imagined, when (the little stone having been raised with one wrench of a spade), Mr. Pickwick, by dint of great personal exertion, bore it with his own hands to the inn, and after having carefully washed it, deposited it on the table.

The exultation and joy of the Pickwickians knew no bounds, when their patience and assiduity, their washing and scraping, were crowned with success. The stone was uneven and broken, and the letters were straggling and

irregular, but the following fragment of an inscription was clearly to be deciphered :

+
B I L S T
U M
P S H I
S. M.
A R K

Mr. Pickwick's eyes sparkled with delight, as he sat and gloated over the treasure he had discovered. He had attained one of the greatest objects of his ambition. In a county known to abound in remains of the early ages ; in a village in which there still existed some memorials of the olden time, he—he, the Chairman of the Pickwick Club—had discovered a strange and curious inscription of unquestionable antiquity, which had wholly escaped the observation of the many learned men who had preceded him. He could hardly trust the evidence of his senses.

"This—this," said he, "determines me. We return to town, to-morrow."

"To-morrow !" exclaimed his admiring followers

"To-morrow," said Mr. Pickwick. "This treasure must be at once deposited where it can be thoroughly investigated, and properly understood. I have another reason for this step. In a few days, an election is to take place for the borough of Eatanswill, at which Mr. Perker, a gentleman whom I lately met, is the agent of one of the candidates. We will behold, and minutely examine, a scene so interesting to every Englishman."

"We will," was the animated cry of three voices.

Mr. Pickwick looked round him. The attachment and fervour of his followers, lighted up a glow of enthusiasm within him. He was their leader, and he felt it.

"Let us celebrate this happy meeting with a convivial glass," said he. This proposition, like the other, was received with unanimous applause. Having himself deposited the important stone in a small deal box, purchased from the landlady for the purpose, he placed himself in an arm-chair at the head of the table ; and the evening was devoted to festivity and conversation.

After a hearty breakfast, the four gentlemen sallied forth to walk to Gravesend, followed by a man bearing the stone in its deal box. They reached that town about one o'clock (their luggage they had directed to be forwarded to the City, from Rochester), and being fortunate enough to secure places on the outside of a coach, arrived in London in sound health and spirits, on that same afternoon.

The next three or four days were occupied with the preparations which were necessary for their journey to the borough of Eatanswill. As any reference to that most important undertaking demands a separate chapter, we may devote the few lines which remain at the close of this, to narrate, with great brevity, the history of the antiquarian discovery.

It appears from the Transactions of the Club, then, that Mr. Pickwick lectured upon the discovery at a General Club Meeting, convened on the night succeeding their return, and entered into a variety of ingenious and erudite speculations on the meaning of the inscription. It also appears that a skilful artist executed a faithful delineation of the curiosity, which was engraven on stone, and presented to the Royal Antiquarian Society, and other learned bodies—that heart-burnings and jealousies without number, were created by rival controversies which were penned upon the subject—and that Mr. Pickwick himself wrote a Pamphlet, containing ninety-six pages of very small print, and twenty-seven different readings of the inscription. That three old gentlemen cut off their eldest sons with a shilling a-piece for presuming to doubt the antiquity of the fragment—and that one enthusiastic individual cut himself off prematurely, in despair at being unable to fathom its meaning. That Mr. Pickwick was elected an honorary member of seventeen native and foreign societies, for making the discovery; that none of the seventeen could make anything of it; but that all the seventeen agreed it was very extraordinary.

Mr. Blotton, indeed—and the name will be doomed to the undying contempt of those who cultivate the mysterious and the sublime—Mr. Blotton, we say, with the doubt and cavilling peculiar to vulgar minds, presumed to state a view of the case, as degrading as ridiculous. Mr. Blotton, with a mean desire to tarnish the lustre of the immortal name of Pickwick, actually undertook a journey to Cobham in person, and on his return, sarcastically observed in an oration at the

club, that he had seen the man from whom the stone was purchased; that the man presumed the stone to be ancient, but solemnly denied the antiquity of the inscription—inasmuch as he represented it to have been rudely carved by himself in an idle mood, and to display letters intended to bear neither more nor less than the simple construction of—"BILL STUMPS, HIS MARK;" and that Mr. Stumps, being little in the habit of original composition, and more accustomed to be guided by the sound of words than by the strict rules of orthography, had omitted the concluding "L" of his christian name.

The Pickwick Club (as might have been expected from so enlightened an Institution) received this statement with the contempt it deserved, expelled the presumptuous and ill-conditioned Blotton, and voted Mr. Pickwick a pair of gold spectacles, in token of their confidence and approbation; in return for which, Mr. Pickwick caused a portrait of himself to be painted, and hung up in the club room.

Mr. Blotton though ejected was not conquered. He also wrote a pamphlet, addressed to the seventeen learned societies, native and foreign, containing a repetition of the statement he had already made, and rather more than half intimating his opinion that the seventeen learned societies were so many "humbugs." Hereupon the virtuous indignation of the seventeen learned societies, native and foreign, being roused, several fresh pamphlets appeared; the foreign learned societies corresponded with the native learned societies; the native learned societies translated the pamphlets of the foreign learned societies into English; the foreign learned societies translated the pamphlets of the native learned societies into all sorts of languages; and thus commenced that celebrated scientific discussion so well known to all men, as the Pickwick controversy.

But this base attempt to injure Mr. Pickwick, recoiled upon the head of its calumnious author. The seventeen learned societies unanimously voted the presumptuous Blotton an ignorant meddler, and forthwith set to work upon more treatises than ever. And to this day the stone remains, an illegible monument of Mr. Pickwick's greatness, and a lasting trophy to the littleness of his enemies.

CHAPTER XII

DESCRIPTIVE OF A VERY IMPORTANT PROCEEDING ON THE
PART OF MR. PICKWICK ; NO LESS AN EPOCH IN
HIS LIFE, THAN IN THIS HISTORY

MR PICKWICK'S apartments in Goswell Street, although on a limited scale, were not only of a very neat and comfortable description, but peculiarly adapted for the residence of a man of his genius and observation. His sitting-room was the first floor front, his bed-room the second floor front ; and thus, whether he were sitting at his desk in his parlour, or standing before the dressing-glass in his dormitory, he had an equal opportunity of contemplating human nature in all the numerous phases it exhibits, in that not more populous than popular thoroughfare. His landlady, Mrs. Bardell—the relict and sole executrix of a deceased custom-house officer—was a comely woman of bustling manners and agreeable appearance, with a natural genius for cooking, improved by study and long practice, into an exquisite talent. There were no children, no servants, no fowls. The only other inmates of the house were a large man and a small boy ; the first a lodger, the second a production of Mrs. Bardell's. The large man was always home precisely at ten o'clock at night, at which hour he regularly condensed himself into the limits of a dwarfish French bedstead in the back parlour ; and the infantine sports and gymnastic exercises of Master Bardell were exclusively confined to the neighbouring pavements and gutters. Cleanliness and quiet reigned throughout the house ; and in it Mr. Pickwick's will was law.

To any one acquainted with these points of the domestic economy of the establishment, and conversant with the admirable regulation of Mr. Pickwick's mind, his appearance and behaviour on the morning previous to that which had

been fixed upon for the journey to Eatanswill, would have been most mysterious and unaccountable. He paced the room to and fro with hurried steps, popped his head out of the window at intervals of about three minutes each, constantly referred to his watch, and exhibited many other manifestations of impatience very unusual with him. It was evident that something of great importance was in contemplation, but what that something was, not even Mrs. Bardell herself had been enabled to discover.

"Mrs. Bardell," said Mr. Pickwick, at last, as that amiable female approached the termination of a prolonged dusting of the apartment.

"Sir," said Mrs. Bardell.

"Your little boy is a very long time gone."

"Why it's a good long way to the Borough, sir," remonstrated Mrs. Bardell.

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, "very true; so it is."

Mr. Pickwick relapsed into silence, and Mrs. Bardell resumed her dusting.

"Mrs. Bardell," said Mr. Pickwick, at the expiration of a few minutes.

"Sir," said Mrs. Bardell again.

"Do you think it a much greater expense to keep two people, than to keep one?"

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, colouring up to the very border of her cap, as she fancied she observed a species of matrimonial twinkle in the eyes of her lodger; "La, Mr. Pickwick, what a question!"

"Well, but *do* you?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"That depends—" said Mrs. Bardell, approaching the duster very near to Mr. Pickwick's elbow, which was planted on the table—"that depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, sir."

"That's very true," said Mr. Pickwick, "but the person I have in my eye (here he looked very hard at Mrs. Bardell) I think possesses these qualities; and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell; which may be of material use to me."

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell; the crimson rising to her cap-border again.

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick, growing energetic, as was his wont in speaking of a subject which interested him, "I do,

indeed ; and to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind."

"Dear me, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

"You'll think it very strange now," said the amiable Mr. Pickwick, with a good-humoured glance at his companion, "that I never consulted you about this matter, and never even mentioned it, till I sent your little boy out this morning—eh?"

Mrs. Bardell could only reply by a look. She had long worshipped Mr. Pickwick at a distance, but here she was, all at once, raised to a pinnacle to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire. Mr. Pickwick was going to propose—a deliberate plan, too—sent her little boy to the Borough, to get him out of the way—how thoughtful—how considerate!

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, "what do you think?"

"Oh, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, trembling with agitation, "you're very kind, sir."

"It'll save you a good deal of trouble, won't it?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, I never thought anything of the trouble, sir," replied Mrs. Bardell; "and, of course, I should take more trouble to please you then, than ever; but it is so kind of you, Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Pickwick; "I never thought of that. When I am in town, you'll always have somebody to sit with you. To be sure, so you will."

"I'm sure I ought to be a very happy woman," said Mrs. Bardell.

"And your little boy—" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless his heart!" interposed Mrs. Bardell, with a maternal sob.

"He, too, will have a companion," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "a lively one, who'll teach him, I'll be bound, more tricks in a week than he would ever learn in a year." And Mr. Pickwick smiled placidly.

"Oh you dear—" said Mrs. Bardell.

Mr. Pickwick started.

"Oh you kind, good, playful dear," said Mrs. Bardell; and without more ado, she rose from her chair, and flung her arms round Mr. Pickwick's neck, with a cataract of tears and a chorus of sobs.

"Bless my soul," cried the astonished Mr. Pickwick;—



MRS. BARDELL FAINTS IN MR. PICKWICK'S ARMS

"Mrs. Bardell my good woman—dear me, what a situation—pray consider.—Mrs. Bardell, don't—if anybody should come—"

"Oh, let them come," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, frantically; "I'll never leave you,—dear, kind, good, soul;" and, with these words, Mrs. Bardell clung the tighter.

"Mercy upon me," said Mr. Pickwick, struggling violently, "I hear somebody coming up the stairs. Don't, don't, there's a good creature, don't." But entreaty and remonstrance were alike unavailing: for Mrs. Bardell had fainted in Mr. Pickwick's arms; and before he could gain time to deposit her on a chair, Master Bardell entered the room, ushering in Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass.

Mr. Pickwick was struck motionless and speechless. He stood with his lovely burden in his arms, gazing vacantly on the countenances of his friends, without the slightest attempt at recognition or explanation. They, in their turn, stared at him; and Master Bardell, in his turn, stared at everybody.

The astonishment of the Pickwickians was so absorbing, and the perplexity of Mr. Pickwick was so extreme, that they might have remained in exactly the same relative situations until the suspended animation of the lady was restored, had it not been for a most beautiful and touching expression of filial affection on the part of her youthful son. Clad in a tight suit of corduroy, spangled with brass buttons of a very considerable size, he at first stood at the door astounded and uncertain; but by degrees, the impression that his mother must have suffered some personal damage, pervaded his partially developed mind, and considering Mr. Pickwick as the aggressor, he set up an appalling and semi-earthly kind of howling, and butting forward with his head, commenced assailing that immortal gentleman about the back and legs, with such blows and pinches as the strength of his arm, and the violence of his excitement, allowed.

"Take this little villain away," said the agonised Mr. Pickwick, "he's mad."

"What is the matter?" said the three tongue-tied Pickwickians.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick, pettishly. "Take away the boy" (here Mr. Winkle carried the interesting boy, screaming and struggling, to the further end of the apartment). "Now, help me, lead this woman down stairs."

"Oh, I am better now," said Mrs. Bardell, faintly.

"Let me lead you down stairs," said the ever-gallant Mr. Tupman.

"Thank you, sir—thank you;" exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, hysterically. And down stairs she was led accordingly, accompanied by her affectionate son.

"I cannot conceive—" said Mr. Pickwick, when his friend returned—"I cannot conceive what has been the matter with that woman. I had merely announced to her my intention of keeping a man-servant, when she fell into the extraordinary paroxysm in which you found her. Very extraordinary thing."

"Very," said his three friends.

"Placed me in such an extremely awkward situation," continued Mr. Pickwick.

"Very," was the reply of his followers, as they coughed slightly, and looked dubiously at each other.

This behaviour was not lost upon Mr. Pickwick. He remarked their incredulity. They evidently suspected him.

"There is a man in the passage now," said Mr. Tupman.

"It's the man I spoke to you about," said Mr. Pickwick, "I sent for him to the Borough this morning. Have the goodness to call him up, Snodgrass."

Mr. Snodgrass did as he was desired; and Mr. Samuel Weller forthwith presented himself.

"Oh—you remember me, I suppose?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"I should think so," replied Sam, with a patronising wink. "Queer start that 'ere, but he was one too many for you, warn't he? Up to snuff and a pinch or two over—eh?"

"Never mind that matter now," said Mr. Pickwick hastily, "I want to speak to you about something else. Sit down."

"Thank'ee, sir," said Sam. And down he sat without farther bidding, having previously deposited his old white hat on the landing outside the door. "Ta'nt a werry good 'un to look at," said Sam, "but it's an astonishin' 'un to wear; and afore the brim went, it was a werry handsome tile. Hows'ever it's lighter without it, that's one thing, and every hole lets in some air, that's another—ventilation gossamer I calls it." On the delivery of this sentiment, Mr. Weller smiled agreeably upon the assembled Pickwickians.

"Now with regard to the matter on which I, with the concurrence of these gentlemen, sent for you," said Mr. Pickwick.

"That's the pint, sir," interposed Sam; "out vith it, as the father said to the child, wen he swallowed a farden."

"We want to know, in the first place," said Mr. Pickwick, "whether you have any reason to be discontented with your present situation."

"Afore I answers that 'ere question, gen'l'm'n," replied Mr. Weller, "I should like to know, in the first place, whether you're a goin' to purvide me with a better?"

A sunbeam of placid benevolence played on Mr. Pickwick's features as he said, "I have half made up my mind to engage you myself."

"Have you, though?" said Sam.

Mr. Pickwick nodded in the affirmative.

"Wages?" inquired Sam.

"Twelve pounds a year," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Clothes?"

"Two suits."

"Work?"

"To attend upon me; and travel about with me and these gentlemen here."

"Take the bill down," said Sam, emphatically. "I'm let to a single gentleman, and the terms is agreed upon."

"You accept the situation?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Cert'nly," replied Sam. "If the clothes fits me half as well as the place, they'll do."

"You can get a character of course?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ask the landlady o' the White Hart about that, sir," replied Sam.

"Can you come this evening?"

"I'll get into the clothes this minute, if they're here," said Sam with great alacrity.

"Call at eight this evening," said Mr. Pickwick: "and if the inquiries are satisfactory, they shall be provided."

With the single exception of one amiable indiscretion, in which an assistant housemaid had equally participated, the history of Mr. Weller's conduct was so very blameless, that Mr. Pickwick felt fully justified in closing the engagement that very evening. With the promptness and energy which characterised not only the public proceedings, but all the private actions of this extraordinary man, he at once led his new attendant to one of those convenient emporiums where gentlemen's new and second-hand clothes are provided, and the troublesome and inconvenient formality of measurement

dispensed with ; and before night had closed in. Mr. Weller was furnished with a grey coat with the P. C. button, a black hat with a cockade to it, a pink striped waistcoat, light breeches and gaiters, and a variety of other necessities, too numerous to recapitulate.

“Well,” said that suddenly-transformed individual, as he took his seat on the outside of the Eatanswill coach next morning ; “I wonder whether I’m meant to be a footman, or a groom, or a gamekeeper, or a seedsman. I looks like a sort of compo of every one on ’em. Never mind ; there’s change of air, plenty to see, and little to do ; and all this suits my complaint uncommon ; so long life to the Pickvicks, says I !”

CHAPTER XIII

SOME ACCOUNT OF EATANSWILL; OF THE STATE OF PARTIES THEREIN; AND OF THE ELECTION OF A MEMBER TO SERVE IN PARLIAMENT FOR THAT ANCIENT, LOYAL, AND PATRIOTIC BOROUGH

WE will frankly acknowledge, that up to the period of our being first immersed in the voluminous papers of the Pickwick Club, we had never heard of Eatanswill; we will with equal candour admit, that we have in vain searched for proof of the actual existence of such a place at the present day. Knowing the deep reliance to be placed on every note and statement of Mr. Pickwick's, and not presuming to set up our recollection against the recorded declarations of that great man, we have consulted every authority, bearing upon the subject, to which we could possibly refer. We have traced every name in schedules A and B, without meeting with that of Eatanswill; we have minutely examined every corner of the Pocket County Maps issued for the benefit of society by our distinguished publishers, and the same result has attended our investigation. We are therefore led to believe, that Mr. Pickwick, with that anxious desire to abstain from giving offence to any, and with those delicate feelings for which all who knew him well know he was so eminently remarkable, purposely substituted a fictitious designation, for the real name of the place in which his observations were made. We are confirmed in this belief by a little circumstance, apparently slight and trivial in itself, but when considered in this point of view, not undeserving of notice. In Mr. Pickwick's note-book, we can just trace an entry of the fact, that the places of himself and followers were booked by the Norwich coach; but this entry was afterwards lined through, as if for the purpose of concealing even the direction in which the borough is situated. We will not, therefore,

hazard a guess upon the subject, but will at once proceed with this history; content with the materials which its characters have provided for us.

It appears, then, that the Eatanswill people, like the people of many other small towns, considered themselves of the utmost and most mighty importance, and that every man in Eatanswill, conscious of the weight that attached to his example, felt himself bound to unite, heart and soul, with one of the two great parties that divided the town—the Blues and the Buffs. Now the Blues lost no opportunity of opposing the Buffs, and the Buffs lost no opportunity of opposing the Blues; and the consequence was, that whenever the Buffs and Blues met together at public meeting, Town-Hall, fair, or market, disputes and high words arose between them. With these dissensions it is almost superfluous to say that everything in Eatanswill was made a party question. If the Buffs proposed to new skylight the market-place, the Blues got up public meetings, and denounced the proceeding; if the Blues proposed the erection of an additional pump in the High Street, the Buffs rose as one man and stood aghast at the enormity. There were Blue shops and Buff shops, Blue inns and Buff inns;—there was a Blue aisle and a Buff aisle in the very church itself.

Of course it was essentially and indispensably necessary that each of these powerful parties should have its chosen organ and representative: and, accordingly, there were two newspapers in the town—the Eatanswill Gazette and the Eatanswill Independent; the former advocating Blue principles, and the latter conducted on grounds decidedly Buff. Fine newspapers they were. Such leading articles, and such spirited attacks!—"Our worthless contemporary, the Gazette"—"That disgraceful and dastardly journal, the Independent"—"That false and scurrilous print, the Independent"—"That vile and slanderous calumniator, the Gazette;" these, and other spirit-stirring denunciations were strewn plentifully over the columns of each, in every number, and excited feelings of the most intense delight and indignation in the bosoms of the townspeople.

Mr. Pickwick, with his usual foresight and sagacity, had chosen a peculiarly desirable moment for his visit to the borough. Never was such a contest known. The Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was the Blue candidate; and Horatio Fizkin, Esq., of Fizkin Lodge, near

Eatanswill, had been prevailed upon by his friends to stand forward on the Buff interest. The Gazette warned the electors of Eatanswill that the eyes not only of England, but of the whole civilised world, were upon them; and the Independent imperatively demanded to know, whether the constituency of Eatanswill were the grand fellows they had always taken them for, or base and servile tools, undeserving alike the name of Englishmen and the blessings of freedom. Never had such a commotion agitated the town before.

It was late in the evening, when Mr. Pickwick and his companions, assisted by Sam, dismounted from the roof of the Eatanswill coach. Large blue silk flags were flying from the windows of the Town Arms Inn, and bills were posted in every sash, intimating, in gigantic letters, that the honourable Samuel Slumkey's Committee sat there daily. A crowd of idlers were assembled in the road, looking at a hoarse man in the balcony, who was apparently talking himself very red in the face in Mr. Slumkey's behalf; but the force and point of whose arguments were somewhat impaired by the perpetual beating of four large drums which Mr. Fizkin's committee had stationed at the street corner. There was a busy little man beside him, though, who took off his hat at intervals and motioned to the people to cheer, which they regularly did, most enthusiastically; and as the red-faced gentleman went on talking till he was redder in the face than ever, it seemed to answer his purpose quite as well as if anybody had heard him.

The Pickwickians had no sooner dismounted, than they were surrounded by a branch mob of the honest and independent, who forthwith set up three deafening cheers, which being responded to by the main body (for it's not at all necessary for a crowd to know what they are cheering about) swelled into a tremendous roar of triumph, which stopped even the red-faced man in the balcony.

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob in conclusion.

"One cheer more," screamed the little fugleman in the balcony, and out shouted the mob again, as if lungs were cast iron, with steel works.

"Slumkey for ever!" roared the honest and independent.

"Slumkey for ever!" echoed Mr. Pickwick, taking off his hat.

"No Fizkin!" roared the crowd.

"Certainly not!" shouted Mr. Pickwick.

"Hurrah!" And then there was another roaring, like

that of a whole menagerie when the elephant has rung the bell for the cold meat.

"Who is Slumkey?" whispered Mr. Tupman.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone.

"Hush. Don't ask any questions. It's always best on these occasions to do what the mob do."

"But suppose there are two mobs?" suggested Mr. Snodgrass.

"Shout with the largest," replied Mr. Pickwick.

Volumes could not have said more.

They entered the house, the crowd opening right and left to let them pass, and cheering vociferously. The first object of consideration was to secure quarters for the night.

"Can we have beds here?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, summoning the waiter.

"Don't know, sir," replied the man; "afraid we're full, sir—I'll inquire, sir." Away he went for that purpose, and presently returned, to ask whether the gentlemen were "Blue."

As neither Mr. Pickwick nor his companions took any vital interest in the cause of either candidate, the question was rather a difficult one to answer. In this dilemma Mr. Pickwick bethought himself of his new friend, Mr. Perker.

"Do you know a gentleman of the name of Perker?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Certainly, sir; honourable Mr. Samuel Slumkey's agent."

"He is Blue, I think?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Then *we* are Blue," said Mr. Pickwick; but observing that the man looked rather doubtful at this accommodating announcement, he gave him his card, and desired him to present it to Mr. Perker forthwith, if he should happen to be in the house. The waiter retired; and re-appearing almost immediately with a request that Mr. Pickwick would follow him, led the way to a large room on the first floor, where, seated at a long table covered with books and papers, was Mr. Perker.

"Ah—ah, my dear sir," said the little man, advancing to meet him; "very happy to see you, my dear sir, very. Pray sit down. So you have carried your intention into effect. You have come down here to see an election—eh?"

Mr. Pickwick replied in the affirmative.

"Spirited contest, my dear sir," said the little man.

"I am delighted to hear it," said Mr. Pickwick, rubbing

his hands. "I like to see sturdy patriotism, on whatever side it is called forth;—and so it's a spirited contest?"

"Oh yes," said the little man, "very much so indeed. We have opened all the public-houses in the place, and left our adversary nothing but the beer-shops—masterly stroke of policy that, my dear sir, eh?"—the little man smiled complacently, and took a large pinch of snuff.

"And what are the probabilities as to the result of the contest?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why doubtful, my dear sir; rather doubtful as yet," replied the little man. "Fizkin's people have got three-and-thirty voters in the lock-up coach-house at the White Hart."

"In the coach-house!" said Mr. Pickwick, considerably astonished by this second stroke of policy.

"They keep 'em locked up there till they want 'em," resumed the little man. "The effect of that is, you see, to prevent our getting at them; and even if we could, it would be of no use, for they keep them very drunk on purpose. Smart fellow Fizkin's agent—very smart fellow indeed."

Mr. Pickwick stared, but said nothing.

"We are pretty confident, though," said Mr. Perker, sinking his voice almost to a whisper. "We had a little tea-party here, last night—five-and-forty women, my dear sir—and gave every one of 'em a green parasol when she went away."

"A parasol!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fact, my dear sir, fact. Five-and-forty green parasols, at seven and sixpence a-piece. All women like finery,—extraordinary the effects of those parasols. Secured all their husbands, and half their brothers—beats stockings, and flannel, and all that sort of thing hollow. My idea, my dear sir, entirely. Hail, rain, or sunshine, you can't walk half a dozen yards up the street, without encountering half a dozen green parasols."

Here the little man indulged in a convulsion of mirth, which was only checked by the entrance of a third party.

This was a tall, thin man, with a sandy-coloured head inclined to baldness, and a face in which solemn importance was blended with a look of unfathomable profundity. He was dressed in a long brown surtout, with a black cloth waistcoat, and drab trousers. A double eye-glass dangled at his waistcoat: and on his head he wore a very low-crowned hat with a broad brim. The new-comer was introduced to

Mr. Pickwick as Mr. Pott, the editor of the Eatanswill Gazette. After a few preliminary remarks, Mr. Pott turned round to Mr. Pickwick, and said with solemnity—

“This contest excites great interest in the metropolis, sir?”

“I believe it does,” said Mr. Pickwick.

“To which I have reason to know,” said Pott, looking towards Mr. Perker for corroboration,—“to which I have reason to know that my article of last Saturday in some degree contributed.”

“Not the least doubt of it,” said the little man.

“The press is a mighty engine, sir,” said Pott.

Mr. Pickwick yielded his fullest assent to the proposition.

“But I trust, sir,” said Pott, “that I have never abused the enormous power I wield. I trust, sir, that I have never pointed the noble instrument which is placed in my hands, against the sacred bosom of private life, or the tender breast of individual reputation ;—I trust, sir, that I have devoted my energies to—to endeavours—humble they may be, humble I know they are—to instil those principles of—which—are—”

Here the editor of the Eatanswill Gazette, appearing to ramble, Mr. Pickwick came to his relief, and said—

“Certainly.”

“And what, sir”—said Pott—“what, sir, let me ask you as an impartial man, is the state of the public mind in London, with reference to my contest with the Independent?”

“Greatly excited, no doubt,” interposed Mr. Perker, with a look of slyness which was very likely accidental.

“The contest,” said Pott, “shall be prolonged so long as I have health and strength, and that portion of talent with which I am gifted. From that contest, sir, although it may unsettle men’s minds and excite their feelings, and render them incapable for the discharge of the every-day duties of ordinary life ; from that contest, sir, I will never shrink, till I have set my heel upon the Eatanswill Independent. I wish the people of London, and the people of this country to know, sir, that they may rely upon me ;—that I will not desert them, that I am resolved to stand by them, sir, to the last.”

“Your conduct is most noble, sir,” said Mr. Pickwick ; and he grasped the hand of the magnanimous Pott.

“You are, sir, I perceive, a man of sense and talent,” said

Mr. Pott, almost breathless with the vehemence of his patriotic declaration. "I am most happy, sir, to make the acquaintance of such a man."

"And I," said Mr. Pickwick, "feel deeply honoured by this expression of your opinion. Allow me, sir, to introduce you to my fellow-travellers, the other corresponding members of the club I am proud to have founded."

"I shall be delighted," said Mr. Pott.

Mr. Pickwick withdrew, and returning with his friends, presented them in due form to the editor of the *Eatanswill Gazette*.

"Now, my dear Pott," said little Mr. Perker, "the question is, what are we to do with our friends here?"

"We can stop in this house, I suppose," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not a spare bed in the house, my dear sir—not a single bed."

"Extremely awkward," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very;" said his fellow-voyagers.

"I have an idea upon this subject," said Mr. Pott. "which I think may be very successfully adopted. They have two beds at the Peacock, and I can boldly say, on behalf of Mrs. Pott, that she will be delighted to accommodate Mr. Pickwick and any of his friends, if the other two gentlemen and their servant do not object to shifting, as they best can, at the Peacock."

After repeated pressings on the part of Mr. Pott, and repeated protestations on that of Mr. Pickwick that he could not think of incommoding or troubling his amiable wife, it was decided that it was the only feasible arrangement that could be made. So it *was* made: and after dining together at the Town Arms, the friends separated, Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass repairing to the Peacock, and Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle proceeding to the mansion of Mr. Pott; it having been previously arranged that they should all re-assemble at the Town Arms in the morning, and accompany the honourable Samuel Slumkey's procession to the place of nomination.

Mr. Pott's domestic circle was limited to himself and his wife. All men whom mighty genius has raised to a proud eminence in the world, have usually some little weakness which appears the more conspicuous from the contrast it presents to their general character. If Mr. Pott had a

weakness, it was, perhaps, that he was *rather* too submissive to the somewhat contemptuous control and sway of his wife. We do not feel justified in laying any particular stress upon the fact, because on the present occasion all Mrs. Pott's most winning ways were brought into requisition to receive the two gentlemen.

"My dear," said Mr. Pott, "Mr. Pickwick—Mr. Pickwick of London."

Mrs. Pott received Mr. Pickwick's paternal grasp of the hand with enchanting sweetness: and Mr. Winkle, who had not been announced at all, sidled and bowed, unnoticed, in an obscure corner.

"P. my dear—" said Mrs. Pott.

"My life," said Mr. Pott.

"Pray introduce the other gentleman."

"I beg a thousand pardons," said Mr. Pott. "Permit me, Mrs. Pott, Mr.—"

"Winkle," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Winkle," echoed Mr. Pott; and the ceremony of introduction was complete.

"We owe you many apologies, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, "for disturbing your domestic arrangements at so short a notice."

"I beg you won't mention it, sir," replied the feminine Pott, with vivacity. "It is a high treat to me, I assure you, to see any new faces; living as I do, from day to day, and week to week, in this dull place, and seeing nobody."

"Nobody, my dear!" exclaimed Mr. Pott, archly.

"Nobody but *you*," retorted Mrs. Pott, with asperity.

"You see, Mr. Pickwick," said the host in explanation of his wife's lament, "that we are in some measure cut off from many enjoyments and pleasures of which we might otherwise partake. My public station, as editor of the *Eatanswill Gazette*, the position which that paper holds in the country, my constant immersion in the vortex of politics—"

"P. my dear—" interposed Mrs. Pott.

"My life—" said the editor.

"I wish, my dear, you would endeavour to find some topic of conversation in which these gentlemen might take some rational interest."

"But my love," said Mr. Pott, with great humility, "Mr. Pickwick does take an interest in it."

"It's well for him if he can," said Mrs. Pott, emphatically;

"I am wearied out of my life with your politics, and quarrels with the Independent, and nonsense. I am quite astonished P. at your making such an exhibition of your absurdity."

"But my dear—" said Mr. Pott.

"Oh, nonsense, don't talk to me;" said Mrs. Pott. "Do you play *ecarté*, sir?"

"I shall be very happy to learn under your tuition," replied Mr. Winkle.

"Well, then, draw that little table into this window, and let me get out of hearing of those prosy politics."

"Jane," said Mr. Pott, to the servant who brought in candles, "go down into the office, and bring me up the file of the Gazette for Eighteen Hundred and Twenty Eight. I'll read you—" added the editor, turning to Mr. Pickwick, "I'll just read you a few of the leaders I wrote at that time upon the Buff job of appointing a new tollman to the turnpike here; I rather think they'll amuse you."

"I should like to hear them very much, indeed," said Mr. Pickwick.

Up came the file, and down sat the editor, with Mr. Pickwick at his side.

We have in vain pored over the leaves of Mr. Pickwick's note-book, in the hope of meeting with a general summary of these beautiful compositions. We have every reason to believe that he was perfectly enraptured with the vigour and freshness of the style; indeed Mr. Winkle has recorded the fact that his eyes were closed, as if with excess of pleasure, during the whole time of their perusal.

The announcement of supper put a stop to the game at *ecarté*, and the recapitulation of the beauties of the Eatanswill Gazette. Mrs. Pott was in the highest spirits and the most agreeable humour. Mr. Winkle had already made considerable progress in her good opinion, and she did not hesitate to inform him, confidentially, that Mr. Pickwick was "a delightful old dear." These terms convey a familiarity of expression, in which few of those who were intimately acquainted with that colossal-minded man, would have presumed to indulge. We have preserved them, nevertheless, as affording at once a touching and a convincing proof of the estimation in which he was held by every class of society, and the ease with which he made his way to their hearts and feelings.

It was a late hour of the night—long after Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass had fallen asleep in the inmost recesses of

the Peacock—when the two friends retired to rest. Slumber soon fell upon the senses of Mr. Winkle, but his feelings had been excited, and his admiration roused; and for many hours after sleep had rendered him insensible to earthly objects, the face and figure of the agreeable Mrs. Pott presented themselves again and again to his wandering imagination.

The noise and bustle which ushered in the morning, were sufficient to dispel from the mind of the most romantic visionary in existence, any associations but those which were immediately connected with the rapidly-approaching election. The beating of drums, the blowing of horns and trumpets, the shouting of men, and tramping of horses, echoed and re-echoed through the streets from the earliest dawn of day; and an occasional fight between the light skirmishers of either party at once enlivened the preparations and agreeably diversified their character.

"Well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, as his valet appeared at his bed-room door, just as he was concluding his toilet; "all alive to-day, I suppose?"

"Reg'lar game, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "our people's a collecting down at the Town Arms, and they're a hollering themselves hoarse already."

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, "do they seem devoted to their party, Sam?"

"Never see such dewotion in my life, sir."

"Energetic, eh?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Uncommon," replied Sam; "I never see men eat and drink so much afore. I wonder they a'nt afeer'd o' bustin'."

"That's the mistaken kindness of the gentry here," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Wery likely," replied Sam, briefly.

"Fine, fresh, hearty fellows they seem," said Mr. Pickwick, glancing from the window.

"Wery fresh," replied Sam; "me, and the two waiters at the Peacock, has been a pumpin' over the independent woters as supped there last night."

"Pumping over independent voters!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," said his attendant, "every man slept vere he fell down; we dragged 'em out, one by one, this mornin', and put 'em under the pump, and they're in reg'lar fine order, now. Shillin' a head the committee paid for that 'ere job."

"Cansuchthingsbe!" exclaimed the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

"Lord bless your heart, sir," said Sam, "why where was you half baptized?—that's nothin', that a'nt."

"Nothing?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Nothin' at all, sir," replied his attendant. "The night afore the last day o' the last election here, the opposite party bribed the bar-maid at the Town Arms, to hocus the brandy and water of fourteen unpoll'd electors as was a stoppin' in the house.

"What do you mean by 'hoccussing' brandy and water?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Puttin' laud'num in it," replied Sam. "Blessed if she didn't send 'em all to sleep till twelve hours arter the election was over. They took one man up to the booth, in a truck, fast asleep, by way of experiment, but it was no go—they wouldn't poll him; so they brought him back, and put him to bed again."

"Strange practices, these," said Mr. Pickwick; half speaking to himself and half addressing Sam.

"Not half so strange as a miraculous circumstance as happened to my own father, at an election time, in this werry place, sir," replied Sam.

"What was that?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why he drove a coach down here once," said Sam; "lection time came on, and he was engaged by vun party to bring down woters from London. Night afore he was a going to drive up, committee on t'other side sends for him quietly, and away he goes vith the messenger, who shows him in;—large room—lots of gen'l'm'n—heaps of papers, pens and ink, and all that 'ere. 'Ah, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n in the chair, 'glad to see you, sir; how are you?'—'Werry well, thank'ee, sir,' says my father; 'I hope *you're* pretty middlin',' says he—'Pretty well, thank'ee sir,' says the gen'l'm'n; 'sit down, Mr. Weller—pray sit down, sir.' So my father sits down, and he and the gen'l'm'n looks werry hard at each other. 'You don't remember me?' says the gen'l'm'n.—'Can't say I do,' says my father—'Oh, I know you,' says the gen'l'm'n; 'know'd you when you was a boy,' says he.—'Well, I don't remember you,' says my father—'That's very odd,' says the gen'l'm'n—'Werry,' says my father—'You must have a bad mem'ry, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n—'Well, it is a werry bad 'un,' says my father—'I thought so,' says the gen'l'm'n. So then they pours him out a glass of wine, and gammons him about his driving, and gets him into

a reg'lar good humour, and at last shoves a twenty-pound note in his hand. 'It's a werry bad road between this and London,' says the gen'l'm'n.—'Here and there it is a heavy road,' says my father—'Specially near the canal, I think,' says the gen'l'm'n—'Nasty bit that 'ere,' says my father—'Well, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n, 'you're a verry good whip, and can do what you like with your horses, we know. We're all verry fond o' you, Mr. Weller, so in case you *should* have an accident when you're a bringing these here woters down, and *should* tip 'em over into the canal without hurtin' of 'em, this is for yourself,' says he—'Gen'l'm'n, you're verry kind,' says my father, 'and I'll drink your health in another glass of wine,' says he; which he did, and then buttons up the money, and bows himself out. You wouldn't believe, sir," continued Sam, with a look of inexpressible impudence at his master, "that on the verry day as he came down with them woters, his coach *was* upset on that 'ere verry spot, and ev'ry man on 'em was turned into the canal."

"And got out again?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

"Why," replied Sam, very slowly, "I rather think one old gen'l'm'n was missin'; I know his hat was found, but I a'n't quite certain whether his head was in it or not. But what I look at, is the hex-traordinary, and wonderful coincidence, that arter what that gen'l'm'n said, my father's coach should be upset in that verry place, and on that verry day!"

"It is, no doubt, a verry extraordinary circumstance indeed," said Mr. Pickwick. "But brush my hat, Sam, for I hear Mr. Winkle calling me to breakfast."

With these words Mr. Pickwick descended to the parlour, where he found breakfast laid, and the family already assembled. The meal was hastily despatched; each of the gentleman's hats was decorated with an enormous blue favour, made up by the fair hands of Mrs. Pott herself; and as Mr. Winkle had undertaken to escort that lady to a house-top, in the immediate vicinity of the hustings, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Pott repaired alone to the Town Arms, from the back window of which, one of Mr. Slumkey's committee was addressing six small boys, and one girl, whom he dignified, at every second sentence, with the imposing title of "men of Eatanswill," whereat the six small boys aforesaid cheered prodigiously.

The stable-yard exhibited unequivocal symptoms of the glory and strength of the Eatanswill Blues. There was a regular army of blue flags, some with one handle, and some

with two, exhibiting appropriate devices, in golden characters four feet high, and stout in proportion. There was a grand band of trumpets, bassoons and drums, marshalled four abreast, and earning their money, if ever men did, especially the drum beaters, who were very muscular. There were bodies of constables with blue staves, twenty committee-men with blue scarfs, and a mob of voters with blue cockades. There were electors on horseback, and electors a-foot. There was an open carriage and four, for the honourable Samuel Slumkey; and there were four carriages and pair, for his friends and supporters; and the flags were rustling, and the band was playing, and the constables were swearing, and the twenty committee-men were squabbling, and the mob were shouting, and the horses were backing, and the post-boys perspiring; and everybody, and everything, then and there assembled, was for the special use, behoot, honour, and renown, of the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, one of the candidates for the representation of the Borough of Eatanswill, in the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Loud and long were the cheers, and mighty was the rustling of one of the blue flags, with "Liberty of the Press" inscribed thereon, when the sandy head of Mr. Pott was discerned in one of the windows, by the mob beneath; and tremendous was the enthusiasm when the honourable Samuel Slumkey himself, in top-boots, and a blue neckerchief, advanced and seized the hand of the said Pott, and melodramatically testified by gestures to the crowd, his ineffaceable obligations to the Eatanswill Gazette.

"Is everything ready?" said the honourable Samuel Slumkey to Mr. Perker.

"Everything, my dear sir," was the little man's reply.

"Nothing has been omitted, I hope?" said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

"Nothing has been left undone, my dear sir—nothing whatever. There are twenty washed men at the street door for you to shake hands with; and six children in arms that you're to pat on the head, and inquire the age of; be particular about the children, my dear sir,—it has always a great effect, that sort of thing."

"I'll take care," said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

"And, perhaps, my dear sir—" said the cautious little man, "perhaps if you *could*—I don't mean to say it's in-

dispensable—but if you *could* manage to kiss one of 'em, it would produce a very great impression on the crowd."

"Wouldn't it have as good an effect if the proposer or seconder did that?" said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

"Why, I am afraid it wouldn't," replied the agent; "if it were done by yourself, my dear sir, I think it would make you very popular."

"Very well," said the honourable Samuel Slumkey, with a resigned air, "then it must be done. That's all."

"Arrange the procession," cried the twenty committee-men.

Amidst the cheers of the assembled throng, the band, and the constables, and the committee-men, and the voters, and the horsemen, and the carriages, took their places—each of the two-horse vehicles being closely packed with as many gentlemen as could manage to stand upright in it; and that assigned to Mr. Perker, containing Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and about half a dozen of the committee beside.

There was a moment of awful suspense as the procession waited for the honourable Samuel Slumkey to step into his carriage. Suddenly the crowd set up a great cheering.

"He has come out," said little Mr. Perker, greatly excited; the more so as their position did not enable them to see what was going forward.

Another cheer, much louder.

"He has shaken hands with the men," cried the little agent.

Another cheer, far more vehement.

"He has patted the babies on the head," said Mr. Perker, trembling with anxiety.

A roar of applause that rent the air.

"He has kissed one of 'em!" exclaimed the delighted little man.

A second roar.

"He has kissed another," gasped the excited manager.

A third roar.

"He's kissing 'em all!" screamed the enthusiastic little gentleman. And hailed by the deafening shouts of the multitude, the procession moved on.

How or by what means it became mixed up with the other procession, and how it was ever extricated from the confusion consequent thereupon, is more than we can undertake to describe, inasmuch as Mr. Pickwick's hat was knocked over his eyes, nose, and mouth, by one poke of a Buff flag-staff,

very early in the proceedings. He describes himself as being surrounded on every side, when he could catch a glimpse of the scene, by angry and ferocious countenances, by a vast cloud of dust, and by a dense crowd of combatants. He represents himself as being forced from the carriage by some unseen power, and being personally engaged in a pugilistic encounter; but with whom, or how, or why, he is wholly unable to state. He then felt himself forced up some wooden steps by the persons from behind; and on removing his hat, found himself surrounded by his friends, in the very front of the left-hand side of the hustings. The right was reserved for the Buff party, and the centre for the Mayor and his officers; one of whom—the fat crier of Eatanswill—was ringing an enormous bell, by way of commanding silence, while Mr. Horatio Fizkin, and the honourable Samuel Slumkey, with their hands upon their hearts, were bowing with the utmost affability to the troubled sea of heads that inundated the open space in front; and from whence arose a storm of groans, and shouts, and yells, and hootings, that would have done honour to an earthquake.

"There's Winkle," said Mr. Tupman, pulling his friend by the sleeve.

"Where?" said Mr. Pickwick, putting on his spectacles, which he had fortunately kept in his pocket hitherto.

"There," said Mr. Tupman, "on the top of that house."

And there, sure enough, in the leaden gutter of a tiled roof, were Mr. Winkle and Mrs. Pott, comfortably seated in a couple of chairs, waving their handkerchiefs in token of recognition—a compliment which Mr. Pickwick returned by kissing his hand to the lady.

The proceedings had not yet commenced; and as an inactive crowd is generally disposed to be jocose, this very innocent action was sufficient to awaken their facetiousness.

"Oh you wicked old rascal," cried one voice, "looking arter the girls, are you?"

"Oh you venerable sinner," cried another.

"Putting on his spectacles to look at a married 'ooman!" said a third.

"I see him a winkin at her, with his wicked old eye," shouted a fourth.

"Look arter your wife, Pott," bellowed a fifth;—and then there was a roar of laughter.

As these taunts were accompanied with invidious com-

parisons between Mr. Pickwick and an aged ram, and several witticisms of the like nature; and as they moreover rather tended to convey reflections upon the honour of an innocent lady, Mr. Pickwick's indignation was excessive; but as silence was proclaimed at the moment, he contented himself by scorching the mob with a look of pity for their misguided minds, at which they laughed more boisterously than ever.

"Silence!" roared the Mayor's attendants.

"Whiffin, proclaim silence," said the Mayor, with an air of pomp befitting his lofty station. In obedience to this command the crier performed another concerto on the bell, where-upon a gentleman in the crowd called out "muffins," which occasioned another laugh.

"Gentlemen," said the Mayor, at as loud a pitch as he could possibly force his voice to, "Gentlemen. Brother electors of the Borough of Eatanswill. We are met here to-day for the purpose of choosing a representative in the room of our late—"

Here the Mayor was interrupted by a voice in the crowd.

"Suc-cess to the Mayor!" cried the voice, "and may he never desert the nail and sarspan business, as he got his money by."

This allusion to the professional pursuits of the orator was received with a storm of delight, which, with a bell-accompaniment, rendered the remainder of his speech inaudible, with the exception of the concluding sentence, in which he thanked the meeting for the patient attention with which they had heard him throughout,—an expression of gratitude which elicited another burst of mirth, of about a quarter of an hour's duration.

Next, a tall thin gentleman, in a very stiff white neckerchief, after being repeatedly desired by the crowd to "send a boy home, to ask whether he hadn't left his voice under the pillow," begged to nominate a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament. And when he said it was Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, the Fizkinites applauded, and the Slumkeyites groaned, so long, and so loudly, that both he and the seconder might have sung comic songs in lieu of speaking, without anybody's being a bit the wiser.

The friends of Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, having had their innings, a little choleric, pink-faced man stood forward to propose another fit and proper person to represent the

electors of Eatanswill in Parliament ; and very swimmingly the pink-faced gentleman would have gone on, if he had not been rather too choleric to entertain a sufficient perception of the fun of the crowd. But after a very few sentences of figurative eloquence, the pink-faced gentleman got from denouncing those who interrupted him in the mob, to exchanging defiances with the gentlemen on the hustings ; whereupon arose an uproar which reduced him to the necessity of expressing his feelings by serious pantomime, which he did, and then left the stage to his seconder, who delivered a written speech of half an hour's length, and wouldn't be stopped, because he had sent it all to the Eatanswill Gazette, and the Eatanswill Gazette had already printed it, every word.

Then Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, presented himself for the purpose of addressing the electors ; which he no sooner did, than the band employed by the honourable Samuel Slumkey, commenced performing with a power to which their strength in the morning was a trifle ; in return for which, the Buff crowd belaboured the heads and shoulders of the Blue crowd ; on which the Blue crowd endeavoured to dispossess themselves of their very unpleasant neighbours the Buff crowd ; and a scene of struggling, and pushing, and fighting, succeeded, to which we can no more do justice than the Mayor could, although he issued imperative orders to twelve constables to seize the ringleaders, who might amount in number to two hundred and fifty, or thereabouts. At all these encounters, Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, and his friends, waxed fierce and furious ; until at last Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, begged to ask his opponent the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, whether that band played by his consent ; which question the honourable Samuel Slumkey declining to answer, Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, shook his fist in the countenance of the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall ; upon which the honourable Samuel Slumkey, his blood being up, defied Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, to mortal combat. At this violation of all known rules and precedents of order, the Mayor commanded another fantasia on the bell, and declared that he would bring before himself, both Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, and the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, and bind them over to keep the peace.

Upon this terrific denunciation, the supporters of the two candidates interfered, and after the friends of each party had quarrelled in pairs, for three-quarters of an hour, Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, touched his hat to the honourable Samuel Slumkey: the honourable Samuel Slumkey touched his to Horatio Fizkin, Esquire: the band was stopped: the crowd were partially quieted: and Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, was permitted to proceed.

The speeches of the two candidates, though differing in every other respect, afforded a beautiful tribute to the merit and high worth of the electors of Eatanswill. Both expressed their opinion that a more independent, a more enlightened, a more public-spirited, a more noble-minded, a more disinterested set of men than those who had promised to vote for him, never existed on earth; each darkly hinted his suspicions that the electors in the opposite interest had certain swinish and besotted infirmities which rendered them unfit for the exercise of the important duties they were called upon to discharge. Fizkin expressed his readiness to do anything he was wanted; Slumkey, his determination to do nothing that was asked of him. Both said that the trade, the manufactures, the commerce, the prosperity of Eatanswill, would ever be dearer to their hearts than any earthly object; and each had it in his power to state, with the utmost confidence, that he was the man who would eventually be returned.

There was a show of hands; the Mayor decided in favour of the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall. Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, demanded a poll, and a poll was fixed accordingly. Then a vote of thanks was moved to the Mayor for his able conduct in the chair; and the Mayor devoutly wishing that he had had a chair to display his able conduct in (for he had been standing during the whole proceedings), returned thanks. The processions re-formed, the carriages rolled slowly through the crowd, and its members screeched and shouted after them as their feelings or caprice dictated.

During the whole time of the polling, the town was in a perpetual fever of excitement. Everything was conducted on the most liberal and delightful scale. Exciseable articles were remarkably cheap at all the public-houses; and spring vans paraded the streets for the accommodation of voters who were seized with any temporary dizziness in the head—an epidemic which prevailed among the electors, during the

contest, to a most alarming extent, and under the influence of which they might frequently be seen lying on the pavements in a state of utter insensibility. A small body of electors remained unpollled on the very last day. They were calculating and reflecting persons, who had not yet been convinced by the arguments of either party, although they had had frequent conferences with each. One hour before the close of the poll, Mr. Perker solicited the honour of a private interview with these intelligent, these noble, these patriotic men. It was granted. His arguments were brief, but satisfactory. They went in a body to the poll; and when they returned, the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was returned also.

CHAPTER XIV

COMPRISING A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY AT THE PEACOCK ASSEMBLED

It is pleasant to turn from contemplating the strife and turmoil of political existence, to the peaceful repose of private life. Although in reality no great partisan of either side, Mr. Pickwick was sufficiently fired with Mr. Pott's enthusiasm, to apply his whole time and attention to the proceedings, of which the last chapter affords a description compiled from his own memoranda. Nor while he was thus occupied was Mr. Winkle idle, his whole time being devoted to pleasant walks and short country excursions with Mrs. Pott, who never failed, when such an opportunity presented itself, to seek some relief from the tedious monotony she so constantly complained of. The two gentlemen being thus completely domesticated in the Editor's house, Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were in a great measure cast upon their own resources. Taking but little interest in public affairs, they beguiled their time chiefly with such amusements as the Peacock afforded, which were limited to a bagatelle-board in the first floor, and a sequestered skittle-ground in the back yard. In the science and nicety of both these recreations, which are far more abstruse than ordinary men suppose, they were gradually initiated by Mr. Weller, who possessed a perfect knowledge of such pastimes. Thus, notwithstanding that they were in a great measure deprived of the comfort and advantage of Mr. Pickwick's society, they were still enabled to beguile the time, and to prevent its hanging heavily on their hands.

It was in the evening, however, that the Peacock presented attractions which enabled the two friends to resist even the invitations of the gifted, though prosy, Pott. It was in the

evening that the "commercial room" was filled with a social circle, whose characters and manners it was the delight of Mr. Tupman to observe; whose sayings and doings it was the habit of Mr. Snodgrass to note down.

Most people know what sort of places commercial rooms usually are. That of the Peacock differed in no material respect from the generality of such apartments; that is to say, it was a large bare-looking room, the furniture of which had no doubt been better when it was newer, with a spacious table in the centre, and a variety of smaller dittos in the corners: an extensive assortment of variously shaped chairs, and an old Turkey carpet, bearing about the same relative proportion to the size of the room, as a lady's pocket-handkerchief might to the floor of a watch-box. The walls were garnished with one or two large maps; and several weather-beaten rough great coats, with complicated capes, dangled from a long row of pegs in one corner. The mantelshelf was ornamented with a wooden inkstand, containing one stump of a pen and half a wafer: a road-book and directory: a county history minus the cover: and the mortal remains of a trout in a glass coffin. The atmosphere was redolent of tobacco-smoke, the fumes of which had communicated a rather dingy hue to the whole room, and more especially to the dusty red curtains which shaded the windows. On the sideboard a variety of miscellaneous articles were huddled together, the most conspicuous of which were some very cloudy fish-sauce cruets, a couple of driving-boxes, two or three whips, and as many travelling shawls, a tray of knives and forks, and the mustard.

Here it was that Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were seated on the evening after the conclusion of the election, with several other temporary inmates of the house, smoking and drinking.

"Well, gents," said a stout, hale personage of about forty, with only one eye—a very bright black eye, which twinkled with a roguish expression of fun and good humour, "our noble selves, gents. I always propose that toast to the company, and drink Mary to myself. Eh, Mary!"

"Get along with you, you wretch," said the hand-maiden, obviously not ill pleased with the compliment, however.

"Don't go away, Mary," said the black-eyed man.

"Let me alone, impudence," said the young lady.

"Never mind," said the one-eyed man, calling after the

girl as she left the room. "I'll step out by and by, Mary. Keep your spirits up, dear." Here he went through the not very difficult process of winking upon the company with his solitary eye, to the enthusiastic delight of an elderly personage with a dirty face and a clay pipe.

"Rum creeters is women," said the dirty-faced man, after a pause.

"Ah! no mistake about that," said a very red-faced man, behind a cigar.

After this little bit of philosophy there was another pause.

"There's rummer things than women in this world though, mind you," said the man with the black eye, slowly filling a large Dutch pipe, with a most capacious bowl.

"Are you married?" inquired the dirty-faced man.

"Can't say I am."

"I thought not." Here the dirty-faced man fell into fits of mirth at his own retort, in which he was joined by a man of bland voice and placid countenance, who always made it a point to agree with everybody.

"Women, after all, gentlemen," said the enthusiastic Mr. Snodgrass, "are the great props and comforts of our existence."

"So they are," said the placid gentleman.

"When they're in a good humour," interposed the dirty-faced man.

"And that's very true," said the placid one.

"I repudiate that qualification," said Mr. Snodgrass, whose thoughts were fast reverting to Emily Wardle, "I repudiate it with disdain—with indignation. Show me the man who says anything against women, as women, and I boldly declare he is not a man." And Mr. Snodgrass took his cigar from his mouth, and struck the table violently with his clenched fist.

"That's good sound argument," said the placid man.

"Containing a position which I deny," interrupted he of the dirty countenance.

"And there's certainly a very great deal of truth in what you observe too, sir," said the placid gentleman.

"Your health, sir," said the bagman with the lonely eye, bestowing an approving nod on Mr. Snodgrass.

"Mr. Snodgrass acknowledged the compliment.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH IS GIVEN A FAITHFUL PORTRAITURE OF TWO DISTINGUISHED PERSONS : AND AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF A PUBLIC BREAKFAST IN THEIR HOUSE AND GROUNDS ; WHICH PUBLIC BREAKFAST LEADS TO THE RECOGNITION OF AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF ANOTHER CHAPTER

MR. PICKWICK'S conscience had been somewhat reproaching him for his recent neglect of his friends at the Peacock : and he was just on the point of walking forth in quest of them, on the third morning after the election had terminated, when his faithful valet put into his hand a card, on which was engraved the following inscription :—

Mrs. Leo Hunter.

The Den. Eatanswill.

"Person's a waitin'," said Sam, epigrammatically.

"Does the person want me, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He wants you particklar ; and no one else'll do, as the Devil's private secretary said ven he fetched away Doctor Faustus," replied Mr. Weller.

"He. Is it a gentleman?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"A wery good imitation o' one, if it an't," replied Mr. Weller.

"But this is a lady's card," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Given me by a gen'l'm'n, hows'ever," replied Sam, "and he's a waitin' in the drawing-room—said he'd rather wait all day, than not see you."

Mr. Pickwick, on hearing this determination, descended to the drawing-room, where sat a grave man, who started up on his entrance, and said, with an air of profound respect :

"Mr. Pickwick, I presume?"

"The same."

"Allow me, sir, the honour of grasping your hand. Permit me, sir, to shake it," said the grave man.

"Certainly," said Mr. Pickwick.

The stranger shook the extended hand, and then continued.

"We have heard of your fame, sir. The noise of your antiquarian discussion has reached the ears of Mrs. Leo Hunter—my wife, sir; *I am Mr. Leo Hunter*"—the stranger paused, as if he expected that Mr. Pickwick would be overcome by the disclosure; but seeing that he remained perfectly calm, proceeded.

"My wife, sir—Mrs. Leo Hunter—is proud to number among her acquaintance all those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works and talents. Permit me, sir, to place in a conspicuous part of the list the name of Mr. Pickwick, and his brother members of the club that derives its name from him."

"I shall be extremely happy to make the acquaintance of such a lady, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"You *shall* make it, sir," said the grave man. "To-morrow morning, sir, we give a public breakfast—a *fête champêtre*—to a great number of those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works and talents. Permit Mrs. Leo Hunter, sir, to have the gratification of seeing you at the Den."

"With great pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Mrs. Leo Hunter has many of these breakfasts, sir," resumed the new acquaintance—"‘feasts of reason, sir, and flows of soul,’ as somebody who wrote a sonnet to Mrs. Leo Hunter on her breakfasts, feelingly and originally observed."

"Was *he* celebrated for his works and talents?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He was, sir," replied the grave man, "all Mrs. Leo Hunter's acquaintance are; it is her ambition, sir, to have no other acquaintance."

"It is a very noble ambition," said Mr. Pickwick.

"When I inform Mrs. Leo Hunter, that that remark fell from *your* lips, sir, she will indeed be proud," said the grave man. "You have a gentleman in your train, who has produced some beautiful little poems, I think, sir."

"My friend Mr. Snodgrass has a great taste for poetry," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"So has Mrs. Leo Hunter, sir. She doats on poetry, sir. She adores it; I may say that her whole soul and mind are wound up, and entwined with it. She has produced some delightful pieces, herself, sir. You may have met with her 'Ode to an Expiring Frog,' sir."

"I don't think I have," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You astonish me, sir," said Mr. Leo Hunter. "It created an immense sensation. It was signed with an 'L' and eight stars, and appeared originally in a *Lady's Magazine*. It commenced

'Can I view thee panting, lying
On thy stomach, without sighing
Can I unmoved see thee dying
On a log,
Expiring frog!'"

"Beautiful!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fine," said Mr. Leo Hunter, "so simple."

"Very," said Mr. Pickwick.

"The next verse is still more touching. Shall I repeat it?"

"If you please," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It runs thus," said the grave man, still more gravely.

'Say, have fiends in shape of boys,
With wild halloo, and brutal noise,
Hunted thee from marshy joys,
With a dog,
Expiring frog!'"

"Finely expressed," said Mr. Pickwick.

"All point, sir," said Mr. Leo Hunter, "but you shall hear Mrs. Leo Hunter repeat it. *She* can do justice to it, sir. She will repeat it, in character, sir, to-morrow morning."

"In character!"

"As Minerva. But I forgot—it's a fancy-dress breakfast."

"Dear me," said Mr. Pickwick, glancing at his own figure—"I can't possibly—"

"Can't, sir; can't!" exclaimed Mr. Leo Hunter. "Solomon Lucas, the Jew in the High Street, has thousands of fancy dresses. Consider, sir, how many appropriate characters are open for your selection. Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, Pythagoras—all founders of clubs."

"I know that," said Mr. Pickwick, "but as I cannot put myself in competition with those great men, I cannot presume to wear their dresses."

The grave man considered deeply, for a few seconds, and then said,

"On reflection, sir, I don't know whether it would not afford Mrs. Leo Hunter greater pleasure, if her guests saw a gentleman of your celebrity in his own costume, rather than in an assumed one. I may venture to promise an exception in your case, sir—yes, I am quite certain that on behalf of Mrs. Leo Hunter, I may venture to do so."

"In that case," said Mr. Pickwick, "I shall have great pleasure in coming."

"But I waste your time, sir," said the grave man, as if suddenly recollecting himself. "I know its value, sir. I will not detain you. I may tell Mrs. Leo Hunter, then, that she may confidently expect you and your distinguished friends? Good morning, sir, I am proud to have beheld so eminent a personage—not a step, sir; not a word." And without giving Mr. Pickwick time to offer remonstrance or denial, Mr. Leo Hunter stalked gravely away.

Mr. Pickwick took up his hat, and repaired to the Peacock, but Mr. Winkle had conveyed the intelligence of the fancy ball there, before him.

"Mrs. Pott's going," were the first words with which he saluted his leader.

"Is she?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"As Apollo," replied Mr. Winkle. "Only Pott objects to the tunic."

"He is right. He is quite right," said Mr. Pickwick emphatically.

"Yes:—so she's going to wear a white satin gown with gold spangles."

"They'll hardly know what she's meant for; will they?" inquired Mr. Snodgrass.

"Of course they will," replied Mr. Winkle indignantly. "They'll see her lyre, won't they?"

"True; I forgot that," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"I shall go as a Bandit," interrupted Mr. Tupman.

"What!" said Mr. Pickwick, with a sudden start.

"As a bandit," repeated Mr. Tupman, mildly.

"You don't mean to say," said Mr. Pickwick, gazing with solemn sternness at his friend, "You don't mean to say, Mr. Tupman, that it is your intention to put yourself into a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail?"

"Such is my intention, sir," replied Mr. Tupman warmly. "And why not, sir?"

"Because, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, considerably excited. "Because you are too old, sir."

"Too old!" exclaimed Mr. Tupman.

"And if any further ground of objection be wanting," continued Mr. Pickwick, "you are too fat, sir."

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman, his face suffused with a crimson glow. "This is an insult."

"Sir," replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone, "It is not half the insult to you, that your appearance in my presence in a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail, would be to me."

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman, "you're a fellow."

"Sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "you're another!"

Mr. Tupman advanced a step or two, and glared at Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Pickwick returned the glare, concentrated into a focus by means of his spectacles, and breathed a bold defiance. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle looked on, petrified at beholding such a scene between two such men.

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman, after a short pause, speaking in a low, deep voice, "you have called me old."

"I have," said Mr. Pickwick.

"And fat."

"I reiterate the charge."

"And a fellow."

"So you are!"

There was a fearful pause.

"My attachment to your person, sir," said Mr. Tupman, speaking in a voice tremulous with emotion, and tucking up his wristbands meanwhile, "is great—very great—but upon that person, I must take summary vengeance."

"Come on, sir!" replied Mr. Pickwick. Stimulated by the exciting nature of the dialogue, the heroic man actually threw himself into a paralytic attitude, confidently supposed by the two by-standers to have been intended as a posture of defence.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass, suddenly recovering the power of speech, of which intense astonishment had previously bereft him, and rushing between the two, at the imminent hazard of receiving an application on the temple from each, "What! Mr. Pickwick, with the eyes of the world upon you! Mr. Tupman! Who, in common with us all, derives a lustre from his undying name! For shame, gentlemen; for shame."

The unwonted lines which momentary passion had ruled in Mr. Pickwick's clear and open brow, gradually melted

away, as his young friend spoke, like the marks of a black-lead pencil beneath the softening influence of India rubber. His countenance had resumed its usual benign expression, ere he concluded.

"I have been hasty," said Mr. Pickwick, "very hasty. Tupman; your hand."

The dark shadow passed from Mr. Tupman's face, as he warmly grasped the hand of his friend.

"I have been hasty, too," said he.

"No, no," interrupted Mr. Pickwick, "the fault was mine. You will wear the green velvet jacket?"

"No, no," replied Mr. Tupman.

"To oblige me, you will," resumed Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, well, I will," said Mr. Tupman.

It was accordingly settled that Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, should all wear fancy dresses. Thus Mr. Pickwick was led by the very warmth of his own good feelings to give his consent to a proceeding from which his better judgment would have recoiled—a more striking illustration of his amiable character could hardly have been conceived, even if the events recorded in these pages had been wholly imaginary.

Mr. Leo Hunter had not exaggerated the resources of Mr. Solomon Lucas. His wardrobe was extensive—very extensive—not strictly classical perhaps, nor quite new, nor did it contain any one garment made precisely after the fashion of any age or time, but everything was more or less spangled; and what *can* be prettier than spangles! It may be objected that they are not adapted to the daylight, but everybody knows that they would glitter if there were lamps; and nothing can be clearer than that if people give fancy balls in the day-time, and the dresses do not show quite as well as they would by night, the fault lies solely with the people who give the fancy balls, and is in no wise chargeable on the spangles. Such was the convincing reasoning of Mr. Solomon Lucas; and influenced by such arguments did Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, engage to array themselves in costumes which his taste and experience induced him to recommend as admirably suited to the occasion.

A carriage was hired from the Town Arms, for the accommodation of the Pickwickians, and a chariot was ordered from the same repository, for the purpose of conveying

Mr. and Mrs. Pott to Mrs. Leo Hunter's grounds, which Mr. Pott, as a delicate acknowledgment of having received an invitation, had already confidently predicted in the Eatanswill Gazette "would present a scene of varied and delicious enchantment—a bewildering coruscation of beauty and talent—a lavish and prodigal display of hospitality—above all, a degree of splendour softened by the most exquisite taste; and adornment refined with perfect harmony and the chastest good keeping—compared with which, the fabled gorgeousness of Eastern Fairy-land itself, would appear to be clothed in as many dark and murky colours, as must be the mind of the splenetic and unmanly being who could presume to taint with the venom of his envy, the preparations making by the virtuous and highly distinguished lady, at whose shrine this humble tribute of admiration was offered." This last was a piece of biting sarcasm against the Independent, who in consequence of not having been invited at all, had been through four numbers affecting to sneer at the whole affair, in his very largest type, with all the adjectives in capital letters.

The morning came: it was a pleasant sight to behold Mr. Tupman in full Brigand's costume, with a very tight jacket, sitting like a pincushion over his back and shoulders: the upper portion of his legs encased in the velvet shorts, and the lower part thereof swathed in the complicated bandages to which all Brigands are peculiarly attached. It was pleasing to see his open and ingenuous countenance, well mustachioed and corked, looking out from an open shirt collar; and to contemplate the sugar-loaf hat, decorated with ribbons of all colours, which he was compelled to carry on his knee, inasmuch as no known conveyance with a top to it would admit of any man's carrying it between his head and the roof. Equally humorous and agreeable was the appearance of Mr. Snodgrass in blue satin trunks and cloak, white silk tights and shoes, and Grecian helmet: which everybody knows (and if they do not, Mr. Solomon Lucas did) to have been the regular, authentic, every-day costume of a Troubadour, from the earliest ages down to the time of their final disappearance from the face of the earth. All this was pleasant, but this was nothing compared with the shouting of the populace when the carriage drew up, behind Mr. Pott's chariot, which chariot itself drew up at Mr. Pott's door, which door itself opened, and

displayed the great Pott accoutred as a Russian officer of justice, with a tremendous knout in his hand—tastefully typical of the stern and mighty power of the Eatanswill Gazette, and the fearful lashings it bestowed on public offenders.

“Bravo!” shouted Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass from the passage, when they beheld the walking allegory.

“Bravo!” Mr. Pickwick was heard to exclaim, from the passage.

“Hoo—roar Pott!” shouted the populace. Amid these salutations, Mr. Pott, smiling with that kind of bland dignity which sufficiently testified that he felt his power, and knew how to exert it, got into the chariot.

Then there emerged from the house, Mrs. Pott, who would have looked very like Apollo if she hadn’t had a gown on: conducted by Mr. Winkle, who in his light-red coat, could not possibly have been mistaken for anything but a sportsman, if he had not borne an equal resemblance to a general postman. Last of all came Mr. Pickwick, whom the boys applauded as loud as anybody, probably under the impression that his tights and gaiters were some remnants of the dark ages; and then the two vehicles proceeded towards Mrs. Leo Hunter’s: Mr. Weller (who was to assist in waiting) being stationed on the box of that in which his master was seated.

Every one of the men, women, boys, girls, and babies, who were assembled to see the visitors in their fancy dresses, screamed with delight and ecstasy, when Mr. Pickwick, with the Brigand on one arm, and the Troubadour on the other, walked solemnly up the entrance. Never were such shouts heard, as those which greeted Mr. Tupman’s efforts to fix the sugar-loaf hat on his head, by way of entering the garden in style.

The preparations were on the most delightful scale; fully realising the prophetic Pott’s anticipations about the gorgeousness of Eastern Fairy-land, and at once affording a sufficient contradiction to the malignant statements of the reptile Independent. The grounds were more than an acre and a quarter in extent, and they were filled with people! Never was such a blaze of beauty, and fashion, and literature. There was the young lady who “did” the poetry in the Eatanswill Gazette, in the garb of a sultana, leaning upon the arm of the young gentleman who “did” the review department, and



MRS. LEO HUNTER'S FANCY-DRESS DÉJEUNER

who was appropriately habited in a field marshal's uniform—the boots excepted. There were hosts of these geniuses, and any reasonable person would have thought it honour enough to meet them. But more than these, there were half a dozen lions from London—authors, real authors, who had written whole books, and printed them afterwards—and here you might see 'em, walking about, like ordinary men, smiling, and talking—aye, and talking pretty considerable nonsense too, no doubt with the benign intention of rendering themselves intelligible to the common people about them. Moreover, there was a band of music in pasteboard caps; four something-ean singers in the costume of their country, and a dozen hired waiters in the costume of *their* country—and very dirty costume too. And above all, there was Mrs. Leo Hunter in the character of Minerva, receiving the company, and overflowing with pride and gratification at the notion of having called such distinguished individuals together.

“Mr. Pickwick, ma'am,” said a servant, as that gentleman approached the presiding goddess, with his hat in his hand. and the Brigand and Troubadour on either arm.

“What! Where!” exclaimed Mrs. Leo Hunter, starting up, in an affected rapture of surprise.

“Here,” said Mr. Pickwick.

“Is it possible that I have really the gratification of beholding Mr. Pickwick himself!” ejaculated Mrs. Leo Hunter.

“No other, ma'am,” replied Mr. Pickwick, bowing very low. “Permit me to introduce my friends—Mr. Tupman—Mr. Winkle—Mr. Snodgrass—to the authoress of ‘The Expiring Frog.’”

Very few people but those who have tried it, know what a difficult process it is, to bow in green velvet smalls, and a tight jacket, and high-crowned hat: or in blue satin trunks and white silks: or knee-cords and top-boots that were never made for the wearer, and have been fixed upon him without the remotest reference to the comparative dimensions of himself and the suit. Never were such distortions as Mr. Tupman's frame underwent in his efforts to appear easy and graceful—never was such ingenious posturing, as his fancy-dressed friends exhibited.

“Mr. Pickwick,” said Mrs. Leo Hunter, “I must make you promise not to stir from my side the whole day. There

are hundreds of people here, that I must positively introduce you to."

"You are very kind, ma'am, said Mr. Pickwick.

"In the first place, here are my little girls; I had almost forgotten them," said Minerva, carelessly pointing towards a couple of full-grown young ladies, of whom one might be about twenty, and the other a year or two older, and who were dressed in very juvenile costumes—whether to make them look young, or their mamma younger, Mr. Pickwick does not distinctly inform us.

"They are very beautiful," said Mr. Pickwick, as the juveniles turned away, after being presented.

"They are very like their mamma, sir," said Mr. Pott, majestically.

"Oh you naughty man," exclaimed Mrs. Leo Hunter, playfully tapping the Editor's arm with her fan (Minerva with a fan!)

"Why now, my dear Mrs. Hunter," said Mr. Pott, who was trumpeter in ordinary at the Den, "you *know* that when your picture was in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, last year, everybody inquired whether it was intended for you, or your youngest daughter; for you were so much alike that there was no telling the difference between you."

"Well, and if they did, why need you repeat it, before strangers?" said Mrs. Leo Hunter, bestowing another tap on the slumbering lion of the Eatanswill Gazette.

"Count, Count," screamed Mrs. Leo Hunter to a well-whiskered individual in a foreign uniform, who was passing by.

"Ah! you want me?" said the Count, turning back.

"I want to introduce two very clever people to each other," said Mrs. Leo Hunter. "Mr. Pickwick, I have great pleasure in introducing you to Count Smorltork." She added in a hurried whisper to Mr. Pickwick—"the famous foreigner—gathering materials for his great work on England—hem!—Count Smorltork, Mr. Pickwick."

Mr. Pickwick saluted the Count with all the reverence due to so great a man, and the Count drew forth a set of tablets.

"What you say, Mrs. Hunt?" inquired the Count, smiling graciously on the gratified Mrs. Leo Hunter, "Pig Vig or Big Vig—what you call—Lawyer—eh? I see—that is it. Big Vig"—and the Count was proceeding to enter Mr. Pickwick

in his tablets, as a gentleman of the long robe, who derived his name from the profession to which he belonged, when Mrs. Leo Hunter interposed.

"No, no, Count," said the lady, "Pick-wick."

"Ah, ah, I see," replied the Count. "Peek—christian name; Weeks—surname; good, ver good. Peek Weeks. How you do, Weeks?"

"Quite well, I thank you," replied Mr. Pickwick, with all his usual affability. "Have you been long in England?"

"Long—ver long time—fortnight—more."

"Do you stay here long?"

"One week."

"You will have enough to do," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling. "to gather all the materials you want, in that time."

"Eh, they are gathered," said the Count.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"They are here," added the Count, tapping his forehead significantly. "Large book at home—full of notes—music, picture, science, poetry, poltic; all tings."

"The word politics, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "comprises, in itself, a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude."

"Ah!" said the Count, drawing out the tablets again, "ver good—fine words to begin a chapter. Chapter forty-seven. Poltics. The word poltic surprises by himself—" And down went Mr. Pickwick's remark, in Count Smorltork's tablets, with such variations and additions as the Count's exuberant fancy suggested, or his imperfect knowledge of the language, occasioned.

"Count," said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

"Mrs. Hunt," replied the Count.

"This is Mr. Snodgrass, a friend of Mr. Pickwick's, and a poet."

"Stop," exclaimed the Count, bringing out the tablets once more. "Head, potry—chapter, literary friends-- name, Snowgrass; ver good. Introduced to Snowgrass—great poet, friend of Peek Weeks—by Mrs. Hunt, which wrote other sweet poem—what is that name?—Fog—Perspiring Fog—ver good—ver good indeed." And the Count put up his tablets, and with sundry bows and acknowledgments walked away, thoroughly satisfied that he had made the most important and valuable additions to his stock of information.

"Wonderful man, Count Smorltork," said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

"Sound philosopher," said Mr. Pott.

"Clear-headed, strong-minded person," added Mr. Snodgrass.

A chorus of by-standers took up the shout of Count Smorltork's praise, shook their heads sagely, and unanimously cried "Very!"

As the enthusiasm in Count Smorltork's favour ran very high, his praises might have been sung until the end of the festivities, if the four something-ean singers had not ranged themselves in front of a small apple-tree, to look picturesque, and commenced singing their national songs, which appeared by no means difficult of execution, inasmuch as the grand secret seemed to be, that three of the something-ean singers should grunt, while the fourth howled. This interesting performance having concluded amidst the loud plaudits of the whole company, a boy forthwith proceeded to entangle himself with the rails of a chair, and to jump over it, and crawl under it, and fall down with it, and do everything but sit upon it, and then to make a cravat of his legs, and tie them round his neck, and then to illustrate the ease with which a human being can be made to look like a magnified toad—all which feats yielded delight and satisfaction to the assembled spectators. After which, the voice of Mrs. Pott was heard to chirp faintly forth, something which courtesy interpreted into a song, which was all very classical, and strictly in character, because Apollo was himself a composer, and composers can very seldom sing their own music or anybody else's, either. This was succeeded by Mrs. Leo Hunter's recitation of her far-famed Ode to an Expiring Frog, which was encored once, and would have been encored twice, if the major part of the guests, who thought it was high time to get something to eat, had not said that it was perfectly shameful to take advantage of Mrs. Hunter's good nature. So although Mrs. Leo Hunter professed her perfect willingness to recite the ode again, her kind and considerate friends wouldn't hear of it on any account; and the refreshment room being thrown open, all the people who had ever been there before, scrambled in with all possible despatch: Mrs. Leo Hunter's usual course of proceeding, being, to issue cards for a hundred, and breakfast for fifty, or in other words to feed only the very particular lions, and let the smaller animals take care of themselves.

"Where is Mr. Pott?" said Mrs. Leo Hunter, as she placed the aforesaid lions around her.

"Here I am," said the editor, from the remotest end of

the room ; far beyond all hope of food, unless something was done for him by the hostess.

"Won't you come up here?"

"Oh pray don't mind him," said Mrs. Pott, in the most obliging voice—"you give yourself a great deal of unnecessary trouble, Mrs. Hunter. You'll do very well there, won't you—dear."

"Certainly—love," replied the unhappy Pott, with a grim smile. Alas for the knout ! The nervous arm that wielded it, with such gigantic force, on public characters, was paralysed beneath the glance of the imperious Mrs. Pott.

Mrs. Leo Hunter looked round her in triumph. Count Smorltork was busily engaged in taking notes of the contents of the dishes ; Mr. Tupman was doing the honours of the lobster salad to several lionesses, with a degree of grace which no Brigand ever exhibited before ; Mr. Snodgrass having cut out the young gentleman who cut up the books for the Eatanswill Gazette, was engaged in an impassioned argument with the young lady who did the poetry : and Mr. Pickwick was making himself universally agreeable. Nothing seemed wanting to render the select circle complete, when Mr. Leo Hunter—whose department on these occasions, was to stand about in doorways, and talk to the less important people—suddenly called out—

"My dear ; here's Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall."

"Oh dear," said Mrs. Leo Hunter, "how anxiously I have been expecting him. Pray make room, to let Mr. Fitz-Marshall pass. Tell Mr. Fitz-Marshall, my dear, to come up to me directly, to be scolded for coming so late."

"Coming, my dear ma'am," cried a voice, "as quick as I can—crowds of people—full room—hard work—very."

Mr. Pickwick's knife and fork fell from his hand. He stared across the table at Mr. Tupman, who had dropped *his* knife and fork, and was looking as if he were about to sink into the ground without further notice.

"Ah !" cried the voice, as its owner pushed his way among the last five and twenty Turks, officers, cavaliers, and Charles the Seconds, that remained between him and the table, "regular mangle—Baker's patent—not a crease in my coat, after all this squeezing—might have 'got up my linen' as I came along—ha ! ha ! not a bad idea, that—queer thing to have it mangled when it's upon one, though—trying process—very."

With these broken words, a young man dressed as a naval officer made his way up to the table, and presented to the astonished Pickwickians, the identical form and features of Mr. Alfred Jingle.

The offender had barely time to take Mrs. Leo Hunter's proffered hand, when his eyes encountered the indignant orbs of Mr. Pickwick.

"Hallo!" said Jingle. "Quite forgot—no directions to postillion—give 'em at once—back in a minute."

"The servant, or Mr. Hunter will do it in a moment, Mr. Fitz-Marshall," said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

"No, no—I'll do it—shan't be long—back in no time," replied Jingle. With these words he disappeared among the crowd.

"Will you allow me to ask you, ma'am," said the excited Mr. Pickwick, rising from his seat, "who that young man is, and where he resides!"

"He is a gentleman of fortune, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Leo Hunter, "to whom I very much want to introduce you. The Count will be delighted with him."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily. "His residence—"

"Is at present at the Angel at Bury."

"At Bury?"

"At Bury St. Edmunds, not many miles from here. But dear me, Mr. Pickwick, you are not going to leave us: surely, Mr. Pickwick, you cannot think of going so soon."

But long before Mrs. Leo Hunter had finished speaking, Mr. Pickwick had plunged through the throng, and reached the garden, whither he was shortly afterwards joined by Mr. Tupman, who had followed his friend closely.

"It's of no use," said Mr. Tupman. "He has gone."

"I know it," said Mr. Pickwick, "and I will follow him."

"Follow him! Where?" inquired Mr. Tupman.

"To the Angel at Bury," replied Mr. Pickwick, speaking very quickly. "How do we know whom he is deceiving there? He deceived a worthy man once, and we were the innocent cause. He shall not do it again, if I can help it; I'll expose him! Where's my servant?"

"Here you are, sir," said Mr. Weller, emerging from a sequestered spot, where he had been engaged in discussing a bottle of Madeira, which he had abstracted from the breakfast-table an hour or two before. "Here's your servant,

sir. Proud o' the title, as the Living Skellinton said, ven they show'd him."

"Follow me instantly," said Mr. Pickwick. "Tupman, if I stay at Bury, you can join me there, when I write. Till then, good-bye!"

Remonstrances were useless. Mr. Pickwick was roused, and his mind was made up. Mr. Tupman returned to his companions; and in another hour had drowned all present recollection of Mr. Alfred Jingle, or Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall, in an exhilarating quadrille and a bottle of champagne. By that time, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, perched on the outside of a stage coach, were every succeeding minute placing a less and less distance between themselves and the good old town of Bury St. Edmunds.

CHAPTER XVI

TOO FULL OF ADVENTURE TO BE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED

THERE is no month in the whole year, in which nature wears a more beautiful appearance than in the month of August. Spring has many beauties, and May is a fresh and blooming month, but the charms of this time of year are enhanced by their contrast with the winter season. August has no such advantage. It comes when we remember nothing but clear skies, green fields and sweet-smelling flowers—when the recollection of snow, and ice, and bleak winds, has faded from our minds as completely as they have disappeared from the earth,—and yet what a pleasant time it is! Orchards and corn-fields ring with the hum of labour; trees bend beneath the thick clusters of rich fruit which bow their branches to the ground; and the corn, piled in graceful sheaves, or waving in every light breath that sweeps above it, as if it wooed the sickle, tinges the landscape with a golden hue. A mellow softness appears to hang over the whole earth; the influence of the season seems to extend itself to the very waggon, whose slow motion across the well-reaped field, is perceptible only to the eye, but strikes with no harsh sound upon the ear.

As the coach rolls swiftly past the fields and orchards which skirt the road, groups of women and children, piling the fruit in sieves, or gathering the scattered ears of corn, pause for an instant from their labour, and shading the sun-burnt face with a still browner hand, gaze upon the passengers with curious eyes, while some stout urchin, too small to work, but too mischievous to be left at home, scrambles over the side of the basket in which he has been deposited for security, and kicks and screams with delight. The reaper stops in his work, and stands with folded arms, looking at the vehicle as it whirls past; and the rough cart-horses bestow a sleepy glance upon the smart coach team, which says, as plainly as a horse's glance can, "It's all very fine to look at, but slow

going, over a heavy field, is better than warm work like that, upon a dusty road, after all." You cast a look behind you, as you turn a corner of the road. The women and children have resumed their labour: the reaper once more stoops to his work: the cart-horses have moved on: and all are again in motion.

The influence of a scene like this, was not lost upon the well-regulated mind of Mr. Pickwick. Intent upon the resolution he had formed, of exposing the real character of the nefarious Jingle, in any quarter in which he might be pursuing his fraudulent designs, he sat at first taciturn and contemplative, brooding over the means by which his purpose could be best attained. By degrees his attention grew more and more attracted by the objects around him; and at last he derived as much enjoyment from the ride, as if it had been undertaken for the pleasantest reason in the world.

"Delightful prospect, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Beats the chimley pots, sir," replied Mr. Weller, touching his hat.

"I suppose you have hardly seen anything but chimney-pots and bricks and mortar all your life, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

"I worn't always a boots, sir," said Mr. Weller, with a shake of the head. "I was a vagginer's boy, once."

"When was that?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"When I was first pitched neck and crop into the world, to play at leap-frog with its troubles," replied Sam. "I was a carrier's boy at startin': then a vagginer's, then a helper, then a boots. Now I'm a gen'l'm'n's servant. I shall be a gen'l'm'n myself one of these days. perhaps, with a pipe in my mouth, and a summer-house in the back garden. Who knows? I shouldn't be surprised, for one."

"You are quite a philosopher, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It runs in the family, I b'lieve, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"My father's wery much in that line, now. If my mother-in-law blows him up, he whistles. She flies in a passion, and breaks his pipe; he steps out, and gets another. Then she screams wery loud, and falls into 'sterics: and he smokes wery comfortably 'till she comes to agin. That's philosophy, sir, an't it?"

"A very good substitute for it, at all events," replied Mr. Pickwick, laughing. "It must have been of great service to you, in the course of your rambling life, Sam."

"Service, sir," exclaimed Sam. "You may say that. Arter I run away from the carrier, and afore I took up with the vagginer, I had unfurnished lodgin's for a fortnight."

"Unfurnished lodgings?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes—the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. Fine sleeping-place—within ten minutes' walk of all the public offices—only if there is any objection to it, it is that the sitivation's *rayther* too airy. I see some queer sights there."

"Ah, I suppose you did," said Mr. Pickwick, with an air of considerable interest.

"Sights, sir," resumed Mr. Weller, "as 'ud penetrate your benevolent heart, and come out on the other side. You don't see the reg'lar wagrants there; trust 'em, they knows better than that. Young beggars, male and female, as hasn't made a rise in their profession, takes up their quarters there sometimes; but it's generally the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves in the dark corners o' them lonesome places—poor creeturs as an't up to the twopenny rope."

"And, pray, Sam, what is the twopenny rope?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"The twopenny rope, sir," replied Mr. Weller, "is just a cheap lodgin' house, where the beds is twopence a night."

"What do they call a bed a rope for?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your innocence, sir, that a'nt it," replied Sam.

"Wen the lady and gen'l'm'n as keeps the Hot-el first begun business they used to make the beds on the floor; but this wouldn't do at no price, 'cos instead o' taking a moderate twopenn'orth o' sleep, the lodgers used to lie there half the day. So now they has two ropes, 'bout six foot apart, and three from the floor, which goes right down the room; and the beds are made of slips of coarse sacking, stretched across 'em."

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Well," said Mr. Weller, "the advantage o' the plan's hobvious. At six o'clock every mornin' they lets go the ropes at one end, and down falls all the lodgers. 'Consequence is, that being thoroughly waked, they get up wery quietly, and walk away! Beg your pardon, sir," said Sam, suddenly breaking off in his loquacious discourse. "Is this Bury St. Edmunds?"

"It is," replied Mr. Pickwick.

The coach rattled through the well-paved streets of a handsome little town, of thriving and cleanly appearance,

and stopped before a large inn situated in a wide open street, nearly facing the old abbey.

"And this," said Mr. Pickwick, looking up, "is the Angel! We alight here, Sam. But some caution is necessary. Order a private room, and do not mention my name. You understand."

"Right as a trivet, sir," replied Mr. Weller, with a wink of intelligence; and having dragged Mr. Pickwick's portmanteau from the hind boot, into which it had been hastily thrown when they joined the coach at Eatanswill, Mr. Weller disappeared on his errand. A private room was speedily engaged, and into it Mr. Pickwick was ushered without delay.

"Now, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "the first thing to be done is to—"

"Order dinner, sir," interposed Mr. Weller. "It's very late, sir."

"Ah, so it is," said Mr. Pickwick, looking at his watch. "You are right, Sam."

"And if I might advise, sir," added Mr. Weller, "I'd just have a good night's rest arterwards, and not begin inquiring arter this here deep 'un 'till the mornin'. There's nothin' so refreshin' as sleep, sir, as the servant-girl said afore she drank the egg-cupful o' laudanum."

"I think you are right, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "But I must first ascertain that he is in the house, and not likely to go away."

"Leave that to me, sir," said Sam. "Let me order you a snug little dinner, and make any inquiries below while it's a getting ready; I could worm ev'ry secret out o' the boots' heart, in five minutes, sir."

"Do so," said Mr. Pickwick: and Mr. Weller at once retired.

"In half an hour, Mr. Pickwick was seated at a very satisfactory dinner; and in three-quarters Mr. Weller returned with the intelligence that Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall had ordered his private room to be retained for him, until further notice. He was going to spend the evening at some private house in the neighbourhood, had ordered the boots to sit up until his return, and had taken his servant with him.

"Now, sir," argued Mr. Weller, when he had concluded his report, "if I can get a talk with this here servant in the mornin', he'll tell me all his master's concerns."

"How do you know that?" interposed Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your heart, sir, servants always do," replied Mr. Weller.

"Oh, ah, I forgot that," said Mr. Pickwick. "Well."

"Then you can arrange what's best to be done, sir, and we can act according."

As it appeared that this was the best arrangement that could be made, it was finally agreed upon. Mr. Weller, by his master's permission, retired to spend the evening in his own way; and was shortly afterwards elected, by the unanimous voice of the assembled company, into the tap-room chair, in which honourable post he acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of the gentlemen-frequenters, that their roars of laughter and approbation penetrated to Mr. Pickwick's bed-room, and shortened the term of his natural rest by at least three hours.

Early on the ensuing morning, Mr. Weller was dispelling all the feverish remains of the previous evening's conviviality, through the instrumentality of a halfpenny shower-bath (having induced a young gentleman attached to the stable-department, by the offer of that coin, to pump over his head and face, until he was perfectly restored), when he was attracted by the appearance of a young fellow in mulberry-coloured livery, who was sitting on a bench in the yard, reading what appeared to be a hymn-book, with an air of deep abstraction, but who occasionally stole a glance at the individual under the pump, as if he took some interest in his proceedings, nevertheless.

"You're a rum 'un to look at, you are!" thought Mr. Weller, the first time his eyes encountered the glance of the stranger in the mulberry suit: who had a large, sallow, ugly face, very sunken eyes, and a gigantic head, from which depended a quantity of lank black hair. "You're a rum 'un!" thought Mr. Weller; and thinking this, he went on washing himself, and thought no more about him.

Still the man kept glancing from his hymn-book to Sam, and from Sam to his hymn-book, as if he wanted to open a conversation. So at last, Sam, by way of giving him an opportunity, said with a familiar nod—

"How are you, governor?"

"I am happy to say, I am pretty well, sir," said the man, speaking with great deliberation, and closing the book. "I hope you are the same, sir?"

"Why if I felt less like a walking brandy-bottle, I shouldn't be quite so staggered this mornin'," replied Sam. "Are you stoppin' in this house, old 'un?"

The mulberry man replied in the affirmative.

"How was it, you worn't one of us, last night?" inquired Sam, scrubbing his face with the towel. "You seem one of the jolly sort—looks as convivial as a live trout in a lime basket," added Mr. Weller, in an under tone.

"I was out last night, with my master," replied the stranger.

"What's his name?" inquired Mr. Weller, colouring up very red with sudden excitement, and the friction of the towel combined.

"Fitz-Marshall," said the mulberry man.

"Give us your hand," said Mr. Weller, advancing; "I should like to know you. I like your appearance, old fellow."

"Well, that is very strange," said the mulberry man, with great simplicity of manner. "I like your's so much, that I wanted to speak to you, from the very first moment I saw you under the pump."

"Did you though?"

"Upon my word. Now, isn't that curious?"

"Wery sing'ler," said Sam, inwardly congratulating himself upon the softness of the stranger. "What's your name, my patriarch?"

"Job."

"And a wery good name it is—only one I know, that ain't got a nickname to it. What's the other name?"

"Trotter," said the stranger. "What is yours?"

Sam bore in mind his master's caution, and replied.

"My name's Walker; my master's name's Wilkins. Will you take a drop o' somethin' this mornin', Mr. Trotter?"

Mr. Trotter acquiesced in this agreeable proposal: and having deposited his book in his coat-pocket, accompanied Mr. Weller to the tap, where they were soon occupied in discussing an exhilarating compound, formed by mixing together, in a pewter vessel, certain quantities of British Hollands, and the fragrant essence of the clove.

"And what sort of a place have you got?" inquired Sam, as he filled his companion's glass, for the second time.

"Bad," said Job, smacking his lips, "very bad."

"You don't mean that?" said Sam.

"I do, indeed. Worse than that, my master's going to be married."

"No."

"Yes; and worse than that, too, he's going to run away with an immense rich heiress, from boarding-school."

"What a dragon!" said Sam, refilling his companion's glass. "It's some boarding-school in this town, I suppose, a'n't it?"

Now, although this question was put in the most careless tone imaginable, Mr. Job Trotter plainly showed by gestures, that he perceived his new friend's anxiety to draw forth an answer to it. He emptied his glass, looked mysteriously at his companion, winked both of his small eyes, one after the other, and finally made a motion with his arm, as if he were working an imaginary pump-handle: thereby intimating that he (Mr. Trotter) considered himself as undergoing the process of being pumped, by Mr. Samuel Weller.

"No, no," said Mr. Trotter, in conclusion, "that's not to be told to everybody. That is a secret—a great secret. Mr. Walker."

As the mulberry man said this, he turned his glass upside down, as a means of reminding his companion that he had nothing left wherewith to slake his thirst. Sam observed the hint; and feeling the delicate manner in which it was conveyed, ordered the pewter vessel to be refilled, whereat the small eyes of the mulberry man glistened.

"And so it's a secret?" said Sam.

"I should rather suspect it was," said the mulberry man, sipping his liquor, with a complacent face.

"I suppose your mas'r's wery rich?" said Sam.

Mr. Trotter smiled, and holding his glass in his left hand, gave four distinct slaps on the pocket of his mulberry indescribables with his right, as if to intimate that his master might have done the same without alarming anybody much by the chinking of coin.

"Ah," said Sam, "that's the game, is it?"

The mulberry man nodded significantly.

"Well, and don't you think, old feller," remonstrated Mr. Weller, "that if you let your master take in this here young lady, you're a precious rascal?"

"I know that," said Job Trotter, turning upon his companion a countenance of deep contrition, and groaning

slightly. "I know that, and that's what it is that preys upon my mind. But what am I to do?"

"Do!" said Sam; "di-wulge to the missis, and give up your master."

"Who'd believe me?" replied Job Trotter. "The young lady's considered the very picture of innocence and discretion. She'd deny it, and so would my master. Who'd believe me? I should lose my place, and get indicted for a conspiracy, or some such thing; that's all I should take by my motion."

"There's somethin' in that," said Sam, ruminating; "there's somethin' in that."

"If I knew any respectable gentleman who would take the matter up," continued Mr. Trotter, "I might have some hope of preventing the elopement; but there's the same difficulty, Mr. Walker, just the same. I know no gentleman in this strange place, and ten to one if I did, whether he would believe my story."

"Come this way," said Sam, suddenly jumping up, and grasping the mulberry man by the arm. "My mas'r's the man you want, I see." And after a slight resistance on the part of Job Trotter, Sam led his newly-found friend to the apartment of Mr. Pickwick, to whom he presented him, together with a brief summary of the dialogue we have just repeated.

"I am very sorry to betray my master, sir," said Job Trotter, applying to his eyes a pink checked pocket handkerchief about six inches square.

"The feeling does you a great deal of honour," replied Mr. Pickwick; "but it is your duty, nevertheless."

"I know it is my duty, sir," replied Job, with great emotion. "We should all try to discharge our duty, sir, and I humbly endeavour to discharge mine, sir; but it is a hard trial to betray a master, sir, whose clothes you wear, and whose bread you eat, even though he is a scoundrel, sir."

"You are a very good fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, much affected, "an honest fellow."

"Come, come," interposed Sam, who had witnessed Mr. Trotter's tears with considerable impatience, "blow this here water-cart his'ness. It won't do no good, this won't."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, reproachfully, "I am sorry to find that you have so little respect for this young man's feelings."

"His feelins is all wery well, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "and as they're so wery fine, and it's a pity he should lose 'em, I think he'd better keep 'em in his own buzzum, than let 'em ewaporate in hot water, 'specially as they do no good. Tears never yet wound up a clock, or worked a steam ing. n'. The next time you go out to a smoking party, young fellow, fill your pipe with that 'ere reflection; and for the present just put that bit of pink gingham into your pocket. 'T'an't so handsome that you need keep waving it about, as if you was a tight-rope dancer."

"My man is in the right," said Mr. Pickwick, accosting Job, "although his mode of expressing his opinion is somewhat homely, and occasionally incomprehensible."

"He is, sir, very right," said Mr. Trotter, "and I will give way no longer."

"Very well," said Mr. Pickwick. "Now, where is this boarding-school?"

"It is a large, old, red-brick house, just outside the town, sir," replied Job Trotter.

"And when," said Mr. Pickwick, "when is this villainous design to be carried into execution—when is this elopement to take place?"

"To-night, sir," replied Job.

"To-night!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"This very night, sir," replied Job Trotter. "That is what alarms me so much."

"Instant measures must be taken," said Mr. Pickwick. "I will see the lady who keeps the establishment immediately."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Job, "but that course of proceeding will never do."

"Why not?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"My master, sir, is a very artful man."

"I know he is," said Mr. Pickwick.

"And he has so wound himself round the old lady's heart, sir," resumed Job, "that she would believe nothing to his prejudice, if you went down on your bare knees, and swore it; especially as you have no proof but the word of a servant, who, for anything she knows (and my master would be sure to say so), was discharged for some fault, and does this in revenge."

"What had better be done, then?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Nothing but taking him in the very fact of eloping, will convince the old lady, sir," replied Job.

"All them old cats *will* run their heads agin mile-stones," observed Mr. Weller in a parenthesis.

"But this taking him in the very act of elopement, would be a very difficult thing to accomplish, I fear," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I don't know, sir," said Mr. Trotter, after a few moments' reflection. "I think it might be very easily done."

"How?" was Mr. Pickwick's inquiry.

"Why," replied Mr. Trotter "my master and I, being in the confidence of the two servants, will be secreted in the kitchen at ten o'clock. When the family have retired to rest, we shall come out of the kitchen, and the young lady out of her bed-room. A post-chaise will be waiting, and away we go."

"Well?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, sir, I have been thinking that if you were in waiting in the garden behind, alone—"

"Alone," said Mr. Pickwick "Why alone?"

"I thought it very natural," replied Job, "that the old lady wouldn't like such an unpleasant discovery to be made before more persons than can possibly be helped. The young lady too, sir—consider her feelings."

"You are very right," said Mr. Pickwick. "The consideration evinces your delicacy of feeling. Go on; you are very right."

"Well, sir, I have been thinking that if you were waiting in the back garden alone, and I was to let you in, at the door which opens into it, from the end of the passage, at exactly half-past eleven o'clock, you would be just in the very moment of time to assist me in frustrating the designs of this bad man, by whom I have been unfortunately ensnared." Here Mr. Trotter sighed deeply.

"Don't distress yourself on that account," said Mr. Pickwick, "if he had one grain of the delicacy of feeling which distinguishes you, humble as your station is, I should have some hopes of him."

Job Trotter bowed low; and in spite of Mr. Weller's previous remonstrance, the tears again rose to his eyes.

"I never see such a feller," said Sam. "Blessed if I don't think he's got a main in his head as is always turned on."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, with great severity. "Hold your tongue."

"Werry well, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I don't like this plan," said Mr. Pickwick, after deep meditation. "Why cannot I communicate with the young lady's friends?"

"Because they live one hundred miles from here, sir," responded Job Trotter.

"That's a clincher," said Mr. Weller, aside.

"Then this garden," resumed Mr. Pickwick. "How am I to get into it?"

"The wall is very low, sir, and your servant will give you a leg up."

"My servant will give me a leg up," repeated Mr. Pickwick, mechanically. "You will be sure to be near this door that you speak of?"

"You cannot mistake it, sir; it's the only one that opens into the garden. Tap at it when you hear the clock strike, and I will open it instantly."

"I don't like the plan," said Mr. Pickwick; "but as I see no other, and as the happiness of this young lady's whole life is at stake, I adopt it. I shall be sure to be there."

Thus, for the second time, did Mr. Pickwick's innate good-feeling involve him in an enterprise from which he would most willingly have stood aloof.

"What is the name of the house?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Westgate House, sir. You turn a little to the right when you get to the end of the town; it stands by itself, some little distance off the high road, with the name on a brass plate on the gate."

"I know it," said Mr. Pickwick. "I observed it once before, when I was in this town. You may depend upon me."

Mr. Trotter made another bow, and turned to depart, when Mr. Pickwick thrust a guinea into his hand.

"You're a fine fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, "and I admire your goodness of heart. No thanks. Remember—eleven o'clock."

"There is no fear of my forgetting it, sir," replied Job Trotter. With these words he left the room, followed by Sam.

"I say," said the latter, "not a bad notion that 'ere crying. I'd cry like a rain-water spout in a shower on such good terms. How do you do it?"

"It comes from the heart, Mr. Walker," replied Job, solemnly. "Good morning, sir."

"You're a soft customer, you are;—we've got it all out o' you, any how," thought Mr. Weller, as Job walked away.

We cannot state the precise nature of the thoughts which passed through Mr. Trotter's mind, because we don't know what they were.

The day wore on, evening came, and a little before ten o'clock Sam Weller reported that Mr. Jingle and Job had gone out together, that their luggage was packed up, and that they had ordered a chaise. The plot was evidently in execution, as Mr. Trotter had foretold.

Half-past ten o'clock arrived, and it was time for Mr. Pickwick to issue forth on his delicate errand. Resisting Sam's tender of his great coat, in order that he might have no incumbrance in scaling the wall, he set forth, followed by his attendant.

There was a bright moon but it was behind the clouds. It was a fine dry night, but it was most uncommonly dark. Paths, hedges, fields, houses, and trees, were enveloped in one deep shade. The atmosphere was hot and sultry, the summer lightning quivered faintly on the verge of the horizon, and was the only sight that varied the dull gloom in which everything was wrapped—sound there was none, except the distant barking of some restless house-dog.

They found the house, read the brass-plate, walked round the wall, and stopped at that portion of it which divided them from the bottom of the garden.

"You will return to the inn, Sam, when you have assisted me over," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very well, sir."

"And you will sit up, 'till I return."

"Cert'nly, sir."

"Take hold of my leg; and, when I say 'Over,' raise me gently."

"All right, sir."

Having settled these preliminaries, Mr. Pickwick grasped the top of the wall, and gave the word "Over," which was very literally obeyed. Whether his body partook in some degree of the elasticity of his mind, or whether Mr. Weller's notions of a gentle push were of a somewhat rougher description than Mr. Pickwick's, the immediate effect of his assistance was to jerk that immortal gentleman completely over the wall on to the bed beneath, where, after crushing

three gooseberry-bushes and a rose-tree, he finally alighted at full length.

"You ha'n't hurt yourself, I hope, sir?" said Sam, in a loud whisper, as soon as he recovered from the surprise consequent upon the mysterious disappearance of his master.

"I have not hurt *myself*, Sam, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick, from the other side of the wall, "but I rather think that *you* have hurt me."

"I hope not, sir," said Sam.

"Never mind," said Mr. Pickwick, rising, "it's nothing but a few scratches. Go away, or we shall be overheard."

"Good-bye, sir."

"Good-bye."

With stealthy steps Sam Weller departed, leaving Mr. Pickwick alone in the garden.

Lights occasionally appeared in the different windows of the house, or glanced from the staircases, as if the inmates were retiring to rest. Not caring to go too near the door, until the appointed time, Mr. Pickwick crouched into an angle of the wall, and awaited its arrival.

It was a situation which might well have depressed the spirits of many a man. Mr. Pickwick, however, felt neither depression nor misgiving. He knew that his purpose was in the main a good one, and he placed implicit reliance on the high-minded Job. It was dull, certainly; not to say, dreary; but a contemplative man can always employ himself in meditation. Mr. Pickwick had meditated himself into a doze, when he was roused by the chimes of the neighbouring church ringing out the hour—half-past eleven.

"That is the time," thought Mr. Pickwick, getting cautiously on his feet. He looked up at the house. The lights had disappeared, and the shutters were closed—all in bed, no doubt. He walked on tip-toe to the door, and gave a gentle tap. Two or three minutes passing without any reply, he gave another tap rather louder, and then another rather louder than that.

At length the sound of feet was audible upon the stairs, and then the light of a candle shone through the key-hole of the door. There was a good deal of unchaining and unbolting, and the door was slowly opened.

Now the door opened outwards: and as the door opened wider and wider, Mr. Pickwick receded behind it, more and more. What was his astonishment when he just peeped

out, by way of caution, to see that the person who had opened it was—not Job Trotter, but a servant-girl with a candle in her hand! Mr. Pickwick drew in his head again, with the swiftness displayed by that admirable melodramatic performer, Punch, when he lies in wait for the flat-headed comedian with the tin box of music.

“It must have been the cat, Sarah,” said the girl, addressing herself to some one in the house. “Puss, puss, puss,—tit, tit, tit.”

But no animal being decoyed by these blandishments, the girl slowly closed the door, and re-fastened it; leaving Mr. Pickwick drawn up straight against the wall.

“This is very curious,” thought Mr. Pickwick. “They are sitting up beyond their usual hour, I suppose. Extremely unfortunate, that they should have chosen this night, of all others, for such a purpose—exceedingly.” And with these thoughts, Mr. Pickwick cautiously retired to the angle of the wall in which he had been before ensconced; waiting until such time as he might deem it safe to repeat the signal.

He had not been here five minutes, when a vivid flash of lightning was followed by a loud peal of thunder that crashed and rolled away in the distance with a terrific noise—then came another flash of lightning, brighter than the other, and a second peal of thunder louder than the first; and then down came the rain, with a force and fury that swept everything before it.

Mr. Pickwick was perfectly aware that a tree is a very dangerous neighbour in a thunder-storm. He had a tree on his right, a tree on his left, a third before him, and a fourth behind. If he remained where he was, he might fall the victim of an accident; if he showed himself in the centre of the garden, he might be consigned to a constable;—once or twice he tried to scale the wall, but having no other legs this time, than those with which Nature had furnished him, the only effect of his struggles was to inflict a variety of very unpleasant gratings on his knees and shins, and to throw him into a state of the most profuse perspiration.

“What a dreadful situation,” said Mr. Pickwick, pausing to wipe his brow after this exercise. He looked up at the house—all was dark. They must be gone to bed now. He would try the signal again.

He walked on tip-toe across the moist gravel, and tapped

at the door. He held his breath, and listened at the key-hole. No reply: very odd. Another knock. He listened again. There was a low whispering inside, and then a voice cried—
“Who’s there?”

“That’s not Job,” thought Mr. Pickwick, hastily drawing himself straight up against the wall again. “It’s a woman.”

He had scarcely had time to form this conclusion, when a window above stairs was thrown up, and three or four female voices repeated the query—“Who’s there?”

Mr. Pickwick dared not move hand or foot. It was clear that the whole establishment was roused. He made up his mind to remain where he was, until the alarm had subsided: and then by a supernatural effort, to get over the wall, or perish in the attempt.

Like all Mr. Pickwick’s determinations, this was the best that could be made under the circumstances; but, unfortunately, it was founded upon the assumption that they would not venture to open the door again. What was his discomfiture, when he heard the chain and bolts withdrawn, and saw the door slowly opening, wider and wider! He retreated into the corner, step by step; but do what he would, the interposition of his own person, prevented its being opened to its utmost width.

“Who’s there?” screamed a numerous chorus of treble voices from the staircase inside, consisting of the spinster lady of the establishment, three teachers, five female servants, and thirty boarders, all half-dressed, and in a forest of curl-papers.

Of course Mr. Pickwick didn’t say who *was* there; and then the burden of the chorus changed into—“Lor’! I am so frightened.”

“Cook,” said the lady abbess, who took care to be on the top stair, the very last of the group—“Cook, why don’t you go a little way into the garden?”

“Please, ma’am, I don’t like,” responded the cook.

“Lor’, what a stupid thing that cook is!” said the thirty boarders.

“Cook,” said the lady abbess, with great dignity; “don’t answer me, if you please. I insist upon your looking into the garden immediately.”

Here the cook began to cry, and the housemaid said it was “a shame!” for which partisanship she received a month’s warning on the spot.



THE UNEXPECTED "BREAKING-UP" OF THE SEMINARY FOR
YOUNG LADIES

"Do you hear, cook?" said the lady abbess, stamping her foot impatiently.

"Don't you hear your missus, cook?" said the three teachers.

"What an impudent thing, that cook is!" said the thirty boarders.

The unfortunate cook, thus strongly urged, advanced a step or two, and holding her candle just where it prevented her from seeing anything at all, declared there was nothing there, and it must have been the wind. The door was just going to be closed in consequence, when an inquisitive boarder, who had been peeping between the hinges, set up a fearful screaming, which called back the cook and the housemaid, and all the more adventurous, in no time.

"What is the matter with Miss Smithers?" said the lady abbess, as the aforesaid Miss Smithers proceeded to go into hysterics of four young lady power.

"Lor', Miss Smithers dear," said the other nine-and-twenty boarders.

"Oh, the man—the man—behind the door!" screamed Miss Smithers.

The lady abbess no sooner heard this appalling cry, than she retreated to her own bed-room, double-locked the door, and fainted away comfortably. The boarders, and the teachers, and the servants, fell back upon the stairs, and upon each other; and never was such a screaming, and fainting, and struggling, beheld. In the midst of the tumult Mr. Pickwick emerged from his concealment, and presented himself amongst them.

"Ladies—dear ladies," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, he says we're dear," cried the oldest and ugliest teacher. "Oh, the wretch!"

"Ladies," roared Mr. Pickwick, rendered desperate by the danger of his situation. "Hear me. I am no robber. I want the lady of the house."

"Oh, what a ferocious monster!" screamed another teacher. "He wants Miss Tomkins."

Here there was a general scream.

"Ring the alarm bell, somebody!" cried a dozen voices.

"Don't—don't," shouted Mr. Pickwick. "Look at me. Do I look like a robber! My dear ladies—you may bind me hand and leg, or lock me up in a closet, if you like. Only hear what I have got to say—only hear me."

"How did you come in our garden?" faltered the housemaid.

"Call the lady of the house, and I'll tell her everything—everything:" said Mr. Pickwick, exerting his lungs to the utmost pitch. "Call her—only be quiet, and call her, and you shall hear everything."

It might have been Mr. Pickwick's appearance, or it might have been his manner, or it might have been the temptation—irresistible to a female mind—of hearing something at present enveloped in mystery, that reduced the more reasonable portion of the establishment (some four individuals) to a state of comparative quiet. By them it was proposed, as a test of Mr. Pickwick's sincerity, that he should immediately submit to personal restraint; and that gentleman having consented to hold a conference with Miss Tomkins, from the interior of a closet in which the day boarders hung their bonnets and sandwich-bags, he at once stepped into it of his own accord, and was securely locked in. This revived the others; and Miss Tomkins having been brought to, and brought down, the conference began.

"What did you do in my garden, Man?" said Miss Tomkins, in a faint voice.

"I came to warn you, that one of your young ladies was going to elope to-night," replied Mr. Pickwick, from the interior of the closet.

"Elope!" exclaimed Miss Tomkins, the three teachers, the thirty boarders, and the five servants. "Who with?"

"Your friend, Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall."

"*My* friend! I don't know any such person."

"Well; Mr. Jingle, then."

"I never heard the name in my life."

"Then, I have been deceived, and deluded," said Mr. Pickwick. "I have been the victim of a conspiracy—a foul and base conspiracy. Send to the Angel, my dear ma'am, if you don't believe me. Send to the Angel for Mr. Pickwick's man-servant, I implore you, ma'am."

"He must be respectable—he keeps a man-servant," said Miss Tomkins to the writing and ciphering governess.

"It's my opinion, Miss Tomkins," said the writing and ciphering governess, "that his man-servant keeps him. I think he's a madman, Miss Tomkins, and the other's his keeper."

"I think you are very right, Miss Gwynn," responded

Miss Tomkins. "Let two of the servants repair to the Angel, and let the others remain here, to protect us."

So two of the servants were despatched to the Angel in search of Mr. Samuel Weller: and the remaining three stopped behind to protect Miss Tomkins, and the three teachers, and the thirty boarders. And Mr. Pickwick sat down in the closet, beneath a grove of sandwich-bags, and awaited the return of the messengers, with all the philosophy and fortitude he could summon to his aid.

An hour and a half elapsed before they came back, and when they did come, Mr. Pickwick recognised, in addition to the voice of Mr. Samuel Weller, two other voices, the tones of which struck familiarly on his ear; but whose they were, he could not for the life of him call to mind.

A very brief conversation ensued. The door was unlocked. Mr. Pickwick stepped out of the closet, and found himself in the presence of the whole establishment of Westgate House, Mr. Samuel Weller, and—old Wardle, and his destined son-in-law, Mr. Trundle.

"My dear friend," said Mr. Pickwick, running forward and grasping Mr. Wardle's hand. "my dear friend, pray, for Heaven's sake, explain to this lady the unfortunate and dreadful situation in which I am placed. You must have heard it from my servant; say, at all events, my dear fellow, that I am neither a robber nor a madman."

"I have said so, my dear friend. I have said so already," replied Mr. Wardle, shaking the right hand of his friend, while Mr. Trundle shook the left.

"And whoever says, or has said, he is," interposed Mr. Weller, stepping forward, "says that which is not the truth, but so far from it, on the contrary, quite the reverse. And if there's any number o' men on these here premises as has said so, I shall be wery happy to give 'em all a wery convincing proof o' their being mistaken, in this here wery room, if these wery respectable ladies 'll have the goodness to retire, and order 'em up, one at a time." Having delivered this defiance with great volubility, Mr. Weller struck his open palm emphatically with his clenched fist, and winked pleasantly on Miss Tomkins: the intensity of whose horror at his supposing it within the bounds of possibility that there could be any men on the premises of Westgate House Establishment for Young Ladies, it is impossible to describe.

Mr. Pickwick's explanation having already been partially

made, was soon concluded. But neither in the course of his walk home with his friends, nor afterwards when seated before a blazing fire at the supper he so much needed, could a single observation be drawn from him. He seemed bewildered and amazed. Once, and only once, he turned round to Mr. Wardle, and said

"How did you come here?"

"Trundle and I came down here, for some good shooting on the first," replied Wardle. "We arrived to-night, and were astonished to hear from your servant that you were here too. But I am glad you are," said the old fellow, slapping him on the back. "I am glad you are. We shall have a jovial party on the first, and we'll give Winkle another chance—eh, old boy?"

Mr. Pickwick made no reply; he did not even ask after his friends at Dingley Dell, and shortly afterwards retired for the night, desiring Sam to fetch his candle when he rung.

The bell did ring in due course, and Mr. Weller presented himself.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, looking out from under the bed-clothes.

"Sir," said Mr. Weller.

Mr. Pickwick paused, and Mr. Weller snuffed the candle.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick again, as if with a desperate effort.

"Sir," said Mr. Weller, once more.

"Where is that Trotter?"

"Job, sir?"

"Yes."

"Gone, sir."

"With his master, I suppose?"

"Friend or master, or whatever he is, he's gone with him," replied Mr. Weller. "There's a pair on 'em, sir."

"Jingle suspected my design, and set that fellow on you, with this story, I suppose?" said Mr. Pickwick, half choking.

"Just that, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"It was all false, of course?"

"All, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "Reg'lar do, sir; artful dodge."

"I don't think he'll escape us quite so easily the next time, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"I don't think he will, sir."

“Whenever I meet that Jingle again, wherever it is,” said Mr. Pickwick, raising himself in bed, and indenting his pillow with a tremendous blow, “I’ll inflict personal chastisement on him, in addition to the exposure he so richly merits. I will, or my name is not Pickwick.”

“And whenever I catches hold o’ that there melan-cholly chap with the black hair,” said Sam, “if I don’t bring some real water into his eyes. for once in a way, my name a nt Weller. Good night, sir !”

CHAPTER XVIII

BRIEFLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF TWO POINTS ;—FIRST, THE
POWER OF HYSTERICIS, AND, SECONDLY, THE FORCE
OF CIRCUMSTANCES

For two days after the breakfast at Mrs. Hunter's the Pickwickians remained at Eatanswill, anxiously awaiting the arrival of some intelligence from their revered leader. Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were once again left to their own means of amusement ; for Mr. Winkle, in compliance with a most pressing invitation, continued to reside at Mr. Pott's house, and to devote his time to the companionship of his amiable lady. Nor was the occasional society of Mr. Pott himself, wanting to complete their felicity. Deeply immersed in the intensity of his speculations for the public weal and the destruction of the Independent, it was not the habit of that great man to descend from his mental pinnacle to the humble level of ordinary minds. On this occasion, however, and as if expressly in compliment to any follower of Mr. Pickwick's, he unbent, relaxed, stepped down from his pedestal, and walked upon the ground : benignly adapting his remarks to the comprehension of the herd, and seeming in outward form, if not in spirit, to be one of them.

Such having been the demeanour of this celebrated public character towards Mr. Winkle, it will be readily imagined that considerable surprise was depicted on the countenance of the latter gentleman, when, as he was sitting alone in the breakfast-room, the door was hastily thrown open, and as hastily closed, on the entrance of Mr. Pott, who, stalking majestically towards him, and thrusting aside his proffered hand, ground his teeth, as if to put a sharper edge on what he was about to utter, and exclaimed, in a saw-like voice,—

“Serpent !”

“Sir !” exclaimed Mr. Winkle, starting from his chair.

"Serpent, sir," repeated Mr. Pott, raising his voice, and then suddenly depressing it; "I said, Serpent, sir—make the most of it."

When you have parted with a man, at two o'clock in the morning, on terms of the utmost good fellowship, and he meets you again, at half-past nine, and greets you as a serpent, it is not unreasonable to conclude that something of an unpleasant nature has occurred meanwhile. So Mr. Winkle thought. He returned Mr. Pott's gaze of stone, and in compliance with that gentleman's request, proceeded to make the most he could of the "serpent." The most, however, was nothing at all; so after a profound silence of some minutes' duration, he said,—

"Serpent, sir! Serpent, Mr. Pott! What can you mean, sir?—this is pleasantry."

"Pleasantry, sir!" exclaimed Pott, with a motion of the hand, indicative of a strong desire to hurl the Britannia metal tea-pot at the head of his visitor. "Pleasantry, sir!—but no, I will be calm; I will be calm, sir;" in proof of his calmness, Mr. Pott flung himself into a chair, and foamed at the mouth.

"My dear sir," interposed Mr. Winkle.

"*Dear sir!*" replied Pott. "How dare you address me, as dear sir, sir? How dare you look me in the face and do it, sir?"

"Well, sir, if you come to that," responded Mr. Winkle, "how dare you look *me* in the face, and call me a serpent, sir?"

"Because you are one," replied Mr. Pott.

"Prove it, sir," said Mr. Winkle, warmly. "Prove it."

A malignant scowl passed over the profound face of the editor, as he drew from his pocket, the Independent of that morning; and laying his finger on a particular paragraph, threw the journal across the table to Mr. Winkle.

That gentleman took it up, and read as follows:—

"Our obscure and filthy contemporary, in some disgusting observations on the recent election for this borough, has presumed to violate the hallowed sanctity of private life, and to refer, in a manner not to be misunderstood, to the personal affairs of our late candidate—aye, and notwithstanding his base defeat, we will add, our future member, Mr. Fizkin. What does our dastardly contemporary mean? What would the ruffan say, if we, setting at naught, like

him, the decencies of social intercourse, were to raise the curtain which happily conceals his private life from general ridicule, not to say from general execration? What, if we were even to point out, and comment on, facts and circumstances, which are publicly notorious, and beheld by every one, but our mole-eyed contemporary—what if we were to print the following effusion, which we received while we were writing the commencement of this article, from a talented fellow-townsmen and correspondent!

“‘LINES TO A BRASS POT

“‘Oh Pott! if you'd known
How false she'd have grown,
When you heard the marriage bells tinkle;
You'd have done then, I vow,
What you cannot help now,
And handed her over to W * * * *’”

“What,” said Mr. Pott, solemnly: “what rhymes to ‘tinkle,’ villain?”

“What rhymes to tinkle?” said Mrs. Pott, whose entrance at the moment forestalled the reply. “What rhymes to tinkle? Why Winkle, I should conceive:” saying this, Mrs. Pott smiled sweetly on the disturbed Pickwickian, and extended her hand towards him. The agitated young man would have accepted it, in his confusion, had not Pott indignantly interposed.

“Back, ma’am—back!” said the editor. “Take his hand before my very face!”

“Mr. P.!” said his astonished lady.

“Wretched woman, look here,” exclaimed the husband. “Look here, ma’am—‘Lines to a brass Pot.’ ‘Brass pot;’—that’s me, ma’am. ‘False *she’d* have grown;’—that’s you, ma’am—you.” With this ebullition of rage, which was not unaccompanied with something like a tremble, at the expression of his wife’s face, Mr. Pott dashed the current number of the Eatanswill Independent at her feet.

“Upon my word, sir,” said the astonished Mrs. Pott, stooping to pick up the paper. “Upon my word, sir!”

Mr. Pott winced beneath the contemptuous gaze of his wife. He had made a desperate struggle to screw up his courage, but it was fast coming unscrewed again.

There appears nothing very tremendous in this little sentence, “Upon my word, sir,” when it comes to be read; but

the tone of voice in which it was delivered, and the look that accompanied it, both seeming to bear reference to some revenge to be thereafter visited upon the head of Pott, produced their full effect upon him. The most unskilful observer could have detected in his troubled countenance, a readiness to resign his Wellington boots to any efficient substitute who would have consented to stand in them at that moment.

Mrs. Pott read the paragraph, uttered a loud shriek, and threw herself at full length on the hearth-rug, screaming, and tapping it with the heels of her shoes, in a manner which could leave no doubt of the propriety of her feelings on the occasion.

"My dear," said the petrified Pott,—*"I didn't say I believed it;—I——"* but the unfortunate man's voice was drowned in the screaming of his partner.

"Mrs. Pott, let me entreat you, my dear ma'am, to compose yourself," said Mr. Winkle; but the shrieks and tappings were louder, and more frequent than ever.

"My dear," said Mr. Pott, *"I'm very sorry. If you won't consider your own health, consider me, my dear. We shall have a crowd round the house."* But the more strenuously Mr. Pott entreated, the more vehemently the screams poured forth.

Very fortunately, however, attached to Mrs. Pott's person was a body-guard of one, a young lady whose ostensible employment was to preside over her toilet, but who rendered herself useful in a variety of ways, and in none more so than in the particular department of constantly aiding and abetting her mistress in every wish and inclination opposed to the desires of the unhappy Pott. The screams reached this young lady's ears in due course, and brought her into the room with a speed which threatened to derange, materially, the very exquisite arrangement of her cap and ringlets.

"Oh, my dear, dear mistress!" exclaimed the body-guard, kneeling frantically by the side of the prostrate Mrs. Pott. "Oh, my dear mistress, what is the matter?"

"Your master—your brutal master," murmured the patient.

Pott was evidently giving way.

"It's a shame," said the body-guard, reproachfully. "I know he'll be the death of you, ma'am. Poor dear thing!"

He gave way more. The opposite party followed up the attack.

"Oh don't leave me—don't leave me, Goodwin," murmured

Mrs. Pott, clutching at the wrist of the said Goodwin with an hysteric jerk. "You're the only person that's kind to me, Goodwin."

At this affecting appeal, Goodwin got up a little domestic tragedy of her own, and shed tears copiously.

"Never, ma'am—never," said Goodwin. "Oh, sir, you should be careful—you should indeed; you don't know what harm you may do missis; you'll be sorry for it one day, I know—I've always said so."

The unlucky Pott looked timidly on, but said nothing.

"Goodwin," said Mrs. Pott, in a soft voice.

"Ma'am," said Goodwin.

"If you only knew how I have loved that man——"

"Don't distress yourself by recollecting it, ma'am," said the body-guard.

Pott looked very frightened. It was time to finish him.

"And now," sobbed Mrs. Pott, "now, after all, to be treated in this way; to be reproached and insulted in the presence of a third party, and that party almost a stranger. But I will not submit to it! Goodwin," continued Mrs. Pott, raising herself in the arms of her attendant, "my brother, the Lieutenant, shall interfere. I'll be separated, Goodwin!"

"It would certainly serve him right, ma'am," said Goodwin.

Whatever thoughts the threat of a separation might have awakened in Mr. Pott's mind, he forbore to give utterance to them, and contented himself by saying, with great humility: "My dear, will you hear me?"

A fresh train of sobs was the only reply, as Mrs. Pott grew more hysterical, requested to be informed why she was ever born, and required sundry other pieces of information of a similar description.

"My dear," remonstrated Mr. Pott, "do not give way to these sensitive feelings. I never believed that the paragraph had any foundation, my dear—impossible. I was only angry, my dear—I may say outrageous—with the Independent people for daring to insert it; that's all:" Mr. Pott cast an imploring look at the innocent cause of the mischief, as if to entreat him to say nothing about the serpent.

"And what steps, sir, do you mean to take to obtain redress?" inquired Mr. Winkle, gaining courage as he saw Pott losing it.

"Oh, Goodwin," observed Mrs. Pott, "does he mean to horsewhip the editor of the Independent—does he, Goodwin?"

"Hush, hush, ma'am; pray keep yourself quiet," replied the body-guard. "I dare say he will, if you wish it, ma'am."

"Certainly," said Pott, as his wife evinced decided symptoms of going off again. "Of course I shall."

"When, Goodwin—when?" said Mrs. Pott, still undecided about the going off.

"Immediately, of course," said Mr. Pott; "before the day is out."

"Oh, Goodwin," resumed Mrs. Pott, "it's the only way of meeting the slander, and setting me right with the world."

"Certainly, ma'am," replied Goodwin. "No man as is a man, ma'am, could refuse to do it."

So, as the hysterics were still hovering about, Mr. Pott said once more that he would do it; but Mrs. Pott was so overcome at the bare idea of having ever been suspected, that she was half-a-dozen times on the very verge of a relapse. and most unquestionably would have gone off, had it not been for the indefatigable efforts of the assiduous Goodwin, and repeated entreaties for pardon from the conquered Pott; and finally, when that unhappy individual had been frightened and snubbed down to his proper level, Mrs. Pott recovered, and they went to breakfast.

"You will not allow this base newspaper slander to shorten your stay here, Mr. Winkle?" said Mrs. Pott, smiling through the traces of her tears.

"I hope not," said Mr. Pott, actuated, as he spoke, by a wish that his visitor would choke himself with the morsel of dry toast which he was raising to his lips at the moment: and so terminate his stay effectually.

"I hope not."

"You are very good," said Mr. Winkle; "but a letter has been received from Mr. Pickwick—so I learn by a note from Mr. Tupman, which was brought up to my bed-room door, this morning—in which he requests us to join him at Bury to-day; and we are to leave by the coach at noon."

"But you will come back?" said Mrs. Pott.

"Oh, certainly," replied Mr. Winkle.

"You are quite sure?" said Mrs. Pott, stealing a tender look at her visitor.

"Quite," responded Mr. Winkle.

The breakfast passed off in silence, for each member of the party was brooding over his, or her, own personal grievances. Mrs. Pott was regretting the loss of a beau; Mr. Pott his

rash pledge to horsewhip the Independent; Mr. Winkle his having innocently placed himself in so awkward a situation. Noon approached, and after many adieux and promises to return, he tore himself away.

"If he ever comes back, I'll poison him," thought Mr. Pott, as he turned into the little back office where he prepared his thunderbolts.

"If I ever do come back, and mix myself up with these people again," thought Mr. Winkle, as he wended his way to the Peacock, "I shall deserve to be horsewhipped myself—that's all."

His friends were ready, the coach was nearly so, and in half-an-hour they were proceeding on their journey, along the road over which Mr. Pickwick and Sam had so recently travelled, and of which, as we have already said something, we do not feel called upon to extract Mr. Snodgrass's poetical and beautiful description.

Mr. Weller was standing at the door of the Angel, ready to receive them, and by that gentleman they were ushered to the apartment of Mr. Pickwick, where, to the no small surprise of Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass, and the no small embarrassment of Mr. Tupman, they found old Wardle and Trundle.

"How are you?" said the old man, grasping Mr. Tupman's hand. "Don't hang back, or look sentimental about it; it can't be helped, old fellow. For her sake, I wish you'd had her; for your own, I'm very glad you have not. A young fellow like you will do better one of these days—eh?" With this consolation, Wardle slapped Mr. Tupman on the back, and laughed heartily.

"Well, and how are you, my fine fellows?" said the old gentleman, shaking hands with Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass at the same time. "I have just been telling Pickwick that we must have you all down at Christmas. We're going to have a wedding—a real wedding this time."

"A wedding!" exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass, turning very pale.

"Yes, a wedding. But don't be frightened," said the good-humoured old man; "it's only Trundle there, and Bella."

"Oh, is that all!" said Mr. Snodgrass, relieved from a painful doubt which had fallen heavily on his breast. "Give you joy, sir. How is Joe?"

"Very well," replied the old gentleman. "Sleepy as ever."

"And your mother, and the clergyman, and all of 'em?"

"Quite well."

"Where," said Mr. Tupman, with an effort—"where is—*she*, sir?" and he turned away his head, and covered his eyes with his hand.

"*She!*" said the old gentleman, with a knowing shake of the head. "Do you mean my single relative—eh?"

Mr. Tupman, by a nod, intimated that his question applied to the disappointed Rachael.

"Oh, she's gone away," said the old gentleman. "She's living at a relation's, far enough off. She couldn't bear to see the girls, so I let her go. But come! Here's the dinner. You must be hungry after your ride. I am, without any ride at all; so let us fall to."

Ample justice was done to the meal; and when they were seated round the table, after it had been disposed of, Mr. Pickwick, to the intense horror and indignation of his followers, related the adventure he had undergone, and the success which had attended the base artifices of the diabolical Jingle.

"And the attack of rheumatism which I caught in that garden," said Mr. Pickwick, in conclusion, "renders me lame at this moment."

"I, too, have had something of an adventure," said Mr. Winkle, with a smile; and at the request of Mr. Pickwick he detailed the malicious libel of the Eatanswill Independent, and the consequent excitement of their friend, the editor.

Mr. Pickwick's brow darkened during the recital. His friends observed it, and, when Mr. Winkle had concluded, maintained a profound silence. Mr. Pickwick struck the table emphatically with his clenched fist, and spoke as follows.

"Is it not a wonderful circumstance," said Mr. Pickwick, "that we seem destined to enter no man's house without involving him in some degree of trouble? Does it not, I ask, bespeak the indiscretion, or, worse than that, the blackness of heart—that I should say so!—of my followers, that, beneath whatever roof they locate, they disturb the peace of mind and happiness of some confiding female? Is it not, I say——"

Mr. Pickwick would in all probability have gone on for some time, had not the entrance of Sam, with a letter, caused him to break off in his eloquent discourse. He passed his

handkerchief across his forehead, took off his spectacles, wiped them, and put them on again; and his voice had recovered its wonted softness of tone when he said:

"What have you there, Sam?"

"Called at the Post-office just now, and found this here letter, as has laid there for two days," replied Mr. Weller. "It's sealed with a wafer, and directed in round hand."

"I don't know this hand," said Mr. Pickwick, opening the letter. "Mercy on us! what's this? It must be a jest; it—it—can't be true."

"What's the matter?" was the general inquiry.

"Nobody dead, is there?" said Wardle, alarmed at the horror in Mr. Pickwick's countenance.

Mr. Pickwick made no reply, but, pushing the letter across the table, and desiring Mr. Tupman to read it aloud, fell back in his chair with a look of vacant astonishment quite alarming to behold.

Mr. Tupman, with a trembling voice, read the letter, of which the following is a copy:—

*Freeman's Court, Cornhill, August 28th, 1830.
Bardell against Pickwick.*

Sir,

Having been instructed by Mrs. Martha Bardell to commence an action against you for a breach of promise of marriage, for which the plaintiff lays her damages at fifteen hundred pounds, we beg to inform you that a writ has been issued against you in this suit in the Court of Common Pleas; and request to know, by return of post, the name of your attorney in London, who will accept service thereof.

We are, Sir,

*Your obedient servants,
Dodson and Fogg.*

Mr. Samuel Pickwick.

There was something so impressive in the mute astonishment with which each man regarded his neighbour, and every man regarded Mr. Pickwick, that all seemed afraid to speak. The silence was at length broken by Mr. Tupman.

"Dodson and Fogg," he repeated mechanically.

"Bardell and Pickwick," said Mr. Snodgrass, musing.

"Peace of mind and happiness of confiding females," murmured Mr. Winkle, with an air of abstraction.

"It's a conspiracy," said Mr. Pickwick, at length recovering the power of speech; "a base conspiracy between these two grasping attorneys, Dodson and Fogg. Mrs. Bardell would never do it;—she hasn't the heart to do it;—she hasn't the case to do it. Ridiculous—ridiculous."

"Of her heart," said Wardle, with a smile, "you should certainly be the best judge. I don't wish to discourage you, but I should certainly say that, of her case, Dodson and Fogg are far better judges than any of us can be."

"It's a vile attempt to extort money," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I hope it is," said Wardle, with a short, dry cough.

"Who ever heard me address her in any way but that in which a lodger would address his landlady?" continued Mr. Pickwick, with great vehemence. "Who ever saw me with her? Not even my friends here——"

"Except on one occasion," said Mr. Tupman.

Mr. Pickwick changed colour.

"Ah," said Mr. Wardle. "Well, that's important. There was nothing suspicious then, I suppose?"

Mr. Tupman glanced timidly at his leader. "Why," said he, "there was nothing suspicious; but—I don't know how it happened, mind—she certainly was reclining in his arms."

"Gracious powers!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, as the recollection of the scene in question struck forcibly upon him; "what a dreadful instance of the force of circumstances! So she was—so she was."

"And our friend was soothing her anguish," said Mr. Winkle, rather maliciously.

"So I was," said Mr. Pickwick. "I won't deny it. So I was."

"Hallo!" said Wardle; "for a case in which there's nothing suspicious, this looks rather queer—eh, Pickwick? Ah, sly dog—sly dog!" and he laughed till the glasses on the sideboard rang again.

"What a dreadful conjunction of appearances!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, resting his chin upon his hands. "Winkle—Tupman—I beg your pardon for the observations I made just now. We are all the victims of circumstances, and I the greatest." With this apology Mr. Pickwick buried his head in his hands, and ruminated; while Wardle measured out a regular circle of nods and winks, addressed to the other members of the company.

"I'll have it explained, though," said Mr. Pickwick, raising

his head and hammering the table. "I'll see this Dodson and Fogg! I'll go to London to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow," said Wardle; "you're too lame."

"Well, then, next day."

"Next day is the first of September, and you're pledged to ride out with us, as far as Sir Geoffrey Manning's grounds, at all events, and to meet us at lunch, if you don't take the field."

"Well, then, the day after," said Mr. Pickwick; "Thursday—Sam!"

"Sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Take two places outside to London, on Thursday morning, for yourself and me."

"Wery well, sir."

Mr. Weller left the room, and departed slowly on his errand, with his hands in his pocket, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Rum feller, the hemperor," said Mr. Weller, as he walked slowly up the street. "Think o' his making up to that ere Mrs. Bardell—vith a little boy, too! Always the vay vith these here old 'uns hows'ever, as is such steady goers to look at. I didn't think he'd ha' done it, though—I didn't think he'd ha' done it!" Moralising in this strain, Mr. Samuel Weller bent his steps towards the booking-office.

CHAPTER XIX

A PLEASANT DAY

THE birds, who, happily for their own peace of mind and personal comfort, were in blissful ignorance of the preparations which had been making to astonish them, on the first of September, hailed it no doubt, as one of the pleasantest mornings they had seen that season. Many a young partridge who strutted complacently among the stubble, with all the finicking coxcombry of youth, and many an older one who watched his levity out of his little round eye, with the contemptuous air of a bird of wisdom and experience, alike unconscious of their approaching doom, basked in the fresh morning air with lively and blithesome feelings, and a few hours afterwards were laid low upon the earth. But we grow affecting: let us proceed.

In plain common-place matter-of-fact, then, it was a fine morning—so fine that you would scarcely have believed that the few months of an English summer had yet flown by. Hedges, fields, and trees, hill and moorland, presented to the eye their ever-varying shades of deep rich green; scarce a leaf had fallen, scarce a sprinkle of yellow mingled with the hues of summer, warned you that autumn had begun. The sky was cloudless, the sun shone out bright and warm; the songs of birds, and hum of myriads of summer insects, filled the air; and the cottage gardens, crowded with flowers of every rich and beautiful tint, sparkled, in the heavy dew, like beds of glittering jewels. Everything bore the stamp of summer, and none of its beautiful colours had yet faded from the dye.

Such was the morning, when an open carriage, in which were three Pickwickians, (Mr. Snodgrass having preferred to remain at home,) Mr. Wardle, and Mr. Trundle, with Sam Weller on the box beside the driver, pulled up by a gate at the road-side, before which stood a tall, raw-boned game-

keeper, and a half-booted, leather-leggined boy : each bearing a bag of capacious dimensions, and accompanied by a brace of pointers.

"I say," whispered Mr. Winkle to Wardle, as the man let down the steps, "they don't suppose we're going to kill game enough to fill those bags, do they?"

"Fill them!" exclaimed old Wardle. "Bless you, yes! You shall fill one, and I the other; and when we've done with them, the pockets of our shooting-jackets will hold as much more."

Mr. Winkle dismounted without saying anything in reply to this observation; but he thought within himself, that if the party remained in the open air, until he had filled one of the bags, they stood a considerable chance of catching colds in their heads.

"Hi, Juno, lass—hi, old girl; down, Daph, down," said Wardle, caressing the dogs. "Sir Geoffrey still in Scotland, of course, Martin?"

The tall gamekeeper replied in the affirmative, and looked with some surprise from Mr. Winkle, who was holding his gun as if he wished his coat pocket to save him the trouble of pulling the trigger, to Mr. Tupman, who was holding his as if he were afraid of it—as there is no earthly reason to doubt he really was.

"My friends are not much in the way of this sort of thing yet, Martin," said Wardle, noticing the look. "Live and learn, you know. They'll be good shots one of these days. I beg my friend Winkle's pardon, though; he has had some practice."

Mr. Winkle smiled feebly over his blue neckerchief in acknowledgment of the compliment, and got himself so mysteriously entangled with his gun, in his modest confusion, that if the piece had been loaded, he must inevitably have shot himself dead upon the spot.

"You musn't handle your piece in that ere way, when you come to have the charge in it, sir," said the tall gamekeeper, gruffly, "or I'm damned if you won't make cold meat of some on us."

Mr. Winkle, thus admonished, abruptly altered its position, and in so doing, contrived to bring the barrel into pretty sharp contact with Mr. Weller's head.

"Hallo!" said Sam, picking up his hat, which had been knocked off, and rubbing his temple. "Hallo, sir! if you

comes it this way, you'll fill one o' them bags, and something to spare, at one fire."

Here the leather-leggined boy laughed very heartily, and then tried to look as if it was somebody else, whereat Mr. Winkle frowned majestically.

"Where did you tell the boy to meet us with the snack, Martin?" inquired Wardle.

"Side of One-tree Hill, at twelve o'clock, sir."

"That's not Sir Geoffrey's land, is it?"

"No, sir; but it's close by it. It's Captain Boldwig's lane; but there'll be nobody to interrupt us, and there's a fine bit of turf there."

"Very well," said old Wardle. "Now the sooner we're off the better. Will you join us at twelve, then, Pickwick?"

Mr. Pickwick was particularly desirous to view the sport, the more especially as he was rather anxious in respect of Mr. Winkle's life and limbs. On so inviting a morning, too, it was very tantalising to turn back, and leave his friends to enjoy themselves. It was, therefore, with a very rueful air that he replied,

"Why, I suppose I must."

"An't the gentleman a shot, sir?" inquired the long gamekeeper.

"No," replied Wardle; "and he's lame besides."

"I should very much like to go," said Mr. Pickwick, "very much."

There was a short pause of commiseration.

"There's a barrow t'other side the hedge," said the boy. "If the gentleman's servant would wheel along the paths, he could keep nigh us, and we could lift it over the stiles, and that."

"The wery thing," said Mr. Weller, who was a party interested, inasmuch as he ardently longed to see the sport. "The wery thing. Well said, Smallcheek; I'll have it out in a minute."

But here a difficulty arose. The long gamekeeper resolutely protested against the introduction into a shooting party, of a gentleman in a barrow, as a gross violation of all established rules and precedents.

It was a great objection, but not an insurmountable one. The gamekeeper having been coaxed and feed, and having, moreover, eased his mind by "punching" the head of the inventive youth who had first suggested the use of the machine,

Mr. Pickwick was placed in it, and off the party set ; Wardle and the long gamekeeper leading the way, and Mr. Pickwick in the barrow, propelled by Sam, bringing up the rear.

"Stop, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, when they had got half across the first field.

"What's the matter now ?" said Wardle.

"I won't suffer this barrow to be moved another step," said Mr. Pickwick, resolutely, "unless Winkle carries that gun of his, in a different manner."

"How *am* I to carry it ?" said the wretched Winkle.

"Carry it with the muzzle to the ground," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"It's so unsportsman-like," reasoned Winkle.

"I don't care whether it's unsportsman-like or not," replied Mr. Pickwick ; "I am not going to be shot in a wheelbarrow, for the sake of appearances, to please anybody."

"I know the gentleman 'll put that ere charge into somebody afore he's done," growled the long man.

"Well, well—I don't mind," said poor Winkle, turning his gun-stock uppermost ;—"there."

"Anythin' for a quiet life," said Mr. Weller ; and on they went again.

"Stop !" said Mr. Pickwick, after they had gone a few yards further.

"What now ?" said Wardle.

"That gun of Tupman's is not safe : I know it isn't," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Eh ? What ! not safe ?" said Mr. Tupman, in a tone of great alarm.

"Not as you are carrying it," said Mr. Pickwick. "I am very sorry to make any further objection, but I cannot consent to go on, unless you carry it as Winkle does his."

"I think you had better, sir," said the long gamekeeper, "or you're quite as likely to lodge the charge in yourself as in anything else."

Mr. Tupman, with the most obliging haste, placed his piece in the position required, and the party moved on again ; the two amateurs marching with reversed arms, like a couple of privates at a royal funeral.

The dogs suddenly came to a dead stop, and the party advancing stealthily a single pace, stopped too.

"What's the matter with the dogs' legs ?" whispered Mr. Winkle. "How queer they're standing."

"Hush, can't you?" replied Wardle, softly. "Don't you see, they're making a point?"

"Making a point!" said Mr. Winkle, staring about him, as if he expected to discover some particular beauty in the landscape, which the sagacious animals were calling special attention to. "Making a point! What are they pointing at?"

"Keep your eyes open," said Wardle, not heeding the question in the excitement of the moment. "Now then."

There was a sharp whirring noise, that made Mr. Winkle start back as if he had been shot himself. Bang, bang, went a couple of guns;—the smoke swept quickly away over the field, and curled into the air.

"Where are they?" said Mr. Winkle, in a state of the highest excitement, turning round and round in all directions. "Where are they? Tell me when to fire. Where are they—where are they?"

"Where are they?" said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which the dogs had deposited at his feet. "Why, here they are."

"No, no; I mean the others," said the bewildered Winkle.

"Far enough off, by this time," replied Wardle, coolly reloading his gun.

"We shall very likely be up with another covey in five minutes," said the long gamekeeper. "If the gentleman begins to fire now, perhaps he'll just get the shot out of the barrel by the time they rise."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Mr. Weller.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, compassionating his follower's confusion and embarrassment.

"Sir."

"Don't laugh."

"Certainly not, sir." So, by way of indemnification, Mr. Weller contorted his features from behind the wheelbarrow, for the exclusive amusement of the boy with the leggings, who thereupon burst into a boisterous laugh, and was summarily cuffed by the long gamekeeper, who wanted a pretext for turning round, to hide his own merriment.

"Bravo, old fellow!" said Wardle to Mr. Tupman; "you fired that time, at all events."

"Oh yes," replied Mr. Tupman, with conscious pride. "I let it off."

"Well done. You'll hit something next time, if you look sharp. Very easy, ain't it?"

"Yes, it's very easy," said Mr. Tupman. "How it hurts one's shoulder, though. It nearly knocked me backwards. I had no idea these small fire-arms kicked so."

"Ah," said the old gentleman, smiling: "you'll get used to it in time. Now then—all ready—all right with the barrow there?"

"All right, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Come along then."

"Hold hard, sir," said Sam, raising the barrow.

"Aye, aye," replied Mr. Pickwick; and on they went, as briskly as need be.

"Keep that barrow back now," cried Wardle when it had been hoisted over a stile into another field, and Mr. Pickwick had been deposited in it once more.

"All right, sir," replied Mr. Weller, pausing.

"Now, Winkle," said the old gentleman, "follow me softly, and don't be too late this time."

"Never fear," said Mr. Winkle. "Are they pointing?"

"No, no; not now. Quietly now, quietly." On they crept, and very quietly they would have advanced, if Mr. Winkle, in the performance of some very intricate evolutions with his gun, had not accidentally fired, at the most critical moment, over the boy's head, exactly in the very spot where the tall man's brain would have been, had he been there instead.

"Why, what on earth did you do that for?" said old Wardle, as the birds flew unharmed away.

"I never saw such a gun in my life," replied poor Mr. Winkle, looking at the lock, as if that would do any good. "It goes off of its own accord. It *will* do it."

"Will do it!" echoed Wardle, with something of irritation in his manner. "I wish it would kill something of its own accord."

"It'll do that afore long, sir," observed the tall man, in a low, prophetic voice.

"What do you mean by that observation, sir?" inquired Mr. Winkle, angrily.

"Never mind, sir, never mind," replied the long game-keeper; "I've no family myself, sir; and this here boy's mother will get something handsome from Sir Geoffrey, if he's killed on his land. Load again, sir, load again."

"Take away his gun," cried Mr. Pickwick from the barrow, horror-stricken at the long man's dark insinuations. "Take away his gun, do you hear, somebody?"

Nobody, however, volunteered to obey the command ; and Mr. Winkle, after darting a rebellious glance at Mr. Pickwick, reloaded his gun, and proceeded onwards with the rest.

We are bound, on the authority of Mr. Pickwick, to state, that Mr. Tupman's mode of proceeding evinced far more of prudence and deliberation, than that adopted by Mr. Winkle. Still, this by no means detracts from the great authority of the latter gentleman, on all matters connected with the field ; because, as Mr. Pickwick beautifully observes, it has somehow or other happened, from time immemorial, that many of the best and ablest philosophers, who have been perfect lights of science in matters of theory, have been wholly unable to reduce them to practice.

Mr. Tupman's process, like many of our most sublime discoveries, was extremely simple. With the quickness and penetration of a man of genius, he had at once observed that the two great points to be attained were—first, to discharge his piece without injury to himself, and, secondly, to do so, without danger to the by-standers ;—obviously, the best thing to do, after surmounting the difficulty of firing at all, was to shut his eyes firmly, and fire into the air.

On one occasion, after performing this feat, Mr. Tupman, on opening his eyes, beheld a plump partridge in the act of falling wounded to the ground. He was on the point of congratulating Mr. Wardle on his invariable success, when that gentleman advanced towards him, and grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Tupman," said the old gentleman, "you singled out that particular bird ?"

"No," said Mr. Tupman—"no."

"You did," said Wardle. "I saw you do it—I observed you pick him out—I noticed you, as you raised your piece to take aim ; and I will say this, that the best shot in existence could not have done it more beautifully. You are an older hand at this, than I thought you, Tupman ; you have been out before."

It was in vain for Mr. Tupman to protest, with a smile of self-denial that he never had. The very smile was taken as evidence to the contrary ; and from that time forth, his reputation was established. It is not the only reputation that has been acquired as easily, nor are such fortunate circumstances confined to partridge-shooting.

Meanwhile, Mr. Winkle flashed, and blazed, and smoked

away, without producing any material results worthy of being noted down ; sometimes expending his charge in mid-air, and at others sending it skimming along so near the surface of the ground as to place the lives of the two dogs on a rather uncertain and precarious tenure. As a display of fancy shooting, it was extremely varied and curious ; as an exhibition of firing with any precise object, it was, upon the whole, perhaps a failure. It is an established axiom, that "every bullet has its billet." If it apply in an equal degree to shot, those of Mr. Winkle were unfortunate foundlings, deprived of their natural rights, cast loose upon the world, and billeted nowhere.

"Well," said Wardle, walking up to the side of the barrow, and wiping the streams of perspiration from his jolly red face ; "smoking day, isn't it ?"

"It is, indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick. "The sun is tremendously hot, even to me. I don't know how you must feel it."

"Why," said the old gentleman, "pretty hot. It's past twelve, though. You see that green hill there ?"

"Certainly."

"That's the place where we are to lunch ; and, by Jove, there's the boy with the basket, punctual as clockwork !"

"So he is," said Mr. Pickwick, brightening up. "Good boy, that. I'll give him a shilling, presently. Now, then, Sam, wheel away."

"Hold on, sir," said Mr. Weller, invigorated with the prospect of refreshments. "Out of the way, young leathers. If you walley my precious life don't upset me, as the gen'l'm'n said to the driver when they was a carryin' him to Tyburn." And quickening his pace to a sharp run, Mr. Weller wheeled his master nimbly to the green hill, shot him dexterously out by the very side of the basket, and proceeded to unpack it with the utmost dispatch.

"Weal pie," said Mr. Weller, soliloquising, as he arranged the eatables on the grass. "Wery good thing is weal pie, when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it an't kittens ; and arter all though, where's the odds, when they're so like weal that the wery piemen themselves don't know the difference ?"

"Don't they, Sam ?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not they, sir," replied Mr. Weller, touching his hat. "I lodged in the same house with a pieman once, sir, and

a wery nice man he was—reg'lar clever chap, too—make pies out o' anything, he could. 'What a number o' cats you keep, Mr. Brooks,' says I, when I'd got intimate with him. 'Ah,' says he, 'I do—a good many,' says he. 'You must be wery fond o' cats,' says I. 'Other people is,' says he, 'a winkin' at me; 'they an't in season till the winter though,' says he. 'Not in season!' says I. 'No,' says he, 'fruits is in, cats is out.' 'Why, what do you mean?' says I. 'Mean?' says he. 'That I'll never be a party to the combination o' the butchers, to keep up the prices o' meat,' says he. 'Mr. Weller,' says he, 'a squeezing my hand wery hard, and vispering in my ear—'don't mention this here agin—but it's the seasonin' as does it. They're all made o' them noble animals,' says he, 'a pointin' to a wery nice little tabby kitten, 'and I seasons 'em for beefsteak, weal, or kidney, 'cordin' to the demand. And more than that,' says he, 'I can make a weal a beef-steak, or a beef-steak a kidney, or any one on 'em a mutton, at a minute's notice, just as the market changes, and appetites wary!'

"He must have been a very ingenious young man, that, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, with a slight shudder.

"Just was, sir," replied Mr. Weller, continuing his occupation of emptying the basket, "and the pies was beautiful. Tongue; well that's a wery good thing when it an't a woman's. Bread—knuckle o' ham, reg'lar picter—cold beef in slices, wery good. What's in them stone jars, young touch-and-go?"

"Beer in this one," replied the boy, taking from his shoulder a couple of large stone bottles, fastened together by a leathern strap—"cold punch in t'other."

"And a wery good notion of a lunch it is, take it altogether," said Mr. Weller, surveying his arrangement of the repast with great satisfaction. "Now, gen'l'm'n, 'fall on,' as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets."

It needed no second invitation to induce the party to yield full justice to the meal; and as little pressing did it require to induce Mr. Weller, the long gamekeeper, and the two boys, to station themselves on the grass, at a little distance, and do good execution upon a decent proportion of the viands. An old oak afforded a pleasant shelter to the group, and a rich prospect of arable and meadow land, inters-cted with luxuriant hedges, and richly ornamented with wood, lay spread out before them.

"This is delightful—thoroughly delightful!" said Mr. Pickwick, the skin of whose expressive countenance was rapidly peeling off, with exposure to the sun.

"So it is: so it is, old fellow," replied Wardle. "Come; a glass of punch!"

"With great pleasure," said Mr. Pickwick; the satisfaction of whose countenance, after drinking it, bore testimony to the sincerity of the reply.

"Good," said Mr. Pickwick, smacking his lips. "Very good. I'll take another. Cool; very cool. Come, gentlemen," continued Mr. Pickwick, still retaining his hold upon the jar, "a toast. Our friends at Dingley Dell."

The toast was drunk with loud acclamations.

"I'll tell you what I shall do, to get up my shooting again," said Mr. Winkle, who was eating bread and ham with a pocket-knife. "I'll put a stuffed partridge on the top of a post, and practise at it, beginning at a short distance, and lengthening it by degrees. I understand it's capital practice."

"I know a gen'l'man, sir," said Mr. Weller, "as did that, and begun at two yards; but he never tried it on agin; for he blowed the bird right clean away at the first fire, and nobody ever seed a feather on him arterwards."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Have the goodness to reserve your anecdotes till they are called for."

"Cert'nly, sir."

Here Mr. Weller winked the eye which was not concealed by the beer-can he was raising to his lips with such exquisiteness, that the two boys went into spontaneous convulsions, and even the long man condescended to smile.

CHAPTER XX

SHOWING HOW DODSON AND FOGG WERE MEN OF BUSINESS,
AND THEIR CLERKS MEN OF PLEASURE; AND HOW
AN AFFECTING INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE BETWEEN
MR. WELLER AND HIS LONG-LOST PARENT; SHOWING
ALSO WHAT CHOICE SPIRITS ASSEMBLED AT THE
MAGPIE AND STUMP

IN the ground-floor front of a dingy house, at the very furthest end of Freeman's Court, Cornhill, sat the four clerks of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, two of his Majesty's Attorneys of the Courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas at Westminster, and solicitors of the High Court of Chancery: the aforesaid clerks catching as favourable glimpses of Heaven's light and Heaven's sun, in the course of their daily labours, as a man might hope to do, were he placed at the bottom of a reasonably deep well; and without the opportunity of perceiving the stars in the day-time, which the latter secluded situation affords.

The clerks' office of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg was a dark, mouldy, earthy-smelling room, with a high wainscotted partition to screen the clerks from the vulgar gaze: a couple of old wooden chairs: a very loud-ticking clock: an almanack, an umbrella-stand, a row of hat-pegs, and a few shelves, on which were deposited several ticketed bundles of dirty papers, some old deal boxes with paper labels, and sundry decayed stone ink bottles of various shapes and sizes. There was a glass door leading into the passage which formed the entrance to the court, and on the outer side of this glass door, Mr. Pickwick, closely followed by Sam Weller, presented himself on the Friday morning succeeding the occurrence, of which a faithful narration is given in the last chapter.

"Come in, can't you!" cried a voice from behind the partition, in reply to Mr. Pickwick's gentle tap at the door. And Mr. Pickwick and Sam entered accordingly.

"Mr. Dodson or Mr. Fogg at home, sir?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, gently, advancing, hat in hand, towards the partition.

"Mr. Dodson ain't at home, and Mr. Fogg's particularly engaged," replied the voice; and at the same time the head to which the voice belonged, with a pen behind its ear, looked over the partition, and at Mr. Pickwick.

It was a ragged head, the sandy hair of which, scrupulously parted on one side, and flattened down with pomatum, was twisted into little semi-circular tails round a flat face ornamented with a pair of small eyes, and garnished with a very dirty shirt collar, and a rusty black stock.

"Mr. Dodson ain't at home, and Mr. Fogg's particularly engaged," said the man to whom the head belonged.

"When will Mr. Dodson be back, sir?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Can't say."

"Will it be long before Mr. Fogg is disengaged, sir?"

"Don't know."

Here the man proceeded to mend his pen with great deliberation, while another clerk, who was mixing a Seidlitz powder, under cover of the lid of his desk, laughed approvingly.

"I think I'll wait," said Mr. Pickwick. There was no reply; so Mr. Pickwick sat down unbidden, and listened to the loud ticking of the clock and the murmured conversation of the clerks.

"That was a game, wasn't it?" said one of the gentlemen, in a brown coat and brass buttons, inky drabs, and bluchers, at the conclusion of some inaudible relation of his previous evening's adventures.

"Devilish good—devilish good," said the Seidlitz-powder man.

"Tom Cummins was in the chair," said the man with the brown coat; "It was half-past four when I got to Somers Town, and then I was so uncommon lushey, that I couldn't find the place where the latch-key went in, and was obliged to knock up the old 'ooman. I say, I wonder what old Fogg 'ud say, if he knew it. I should get the sack, I s'pose—eh?"

At this humorous notion, all the clerks laughed in concert.

"There was such a game with Fogg here, this mornin'," said the man in the brown coat, "while Jack was up stairs sorting the papers, and you two were gone to the stamp-office. Fogg was down here, opening the letters, when that chap as we issued the writ against at Camberwell, you know, came in—what's his name again?"

"Ramsey," said the clerk who had spoken to Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, Ramsey—a precious seedy-looking customer. 'Well, sir,' says old Fogg, looking at him very fierce—you know his way—'well, sir, have you come to settle?' 'Yes, I have, sir,' said Ramsey, putting his hand in his pocket, and bringing out the money, 'the debt's two pound ten, and the costs three pound five, and here it is, sir;' and he sighed like bricks, as he lugged out the money, done up in a bit of blotting-paper. Old Fogg looked first at the money, and then at him, and then he coughed in his rum way, so that I knew something was coming. 'You don't know there's a declaration filed, which increases the costs materially, I suppose?' said Fogg. 'You don't say that, sir,' said Ramsey, starting back; 'the time was only out last night, sir.' 'I do say it, though,' said Fogg, 'my clerk's just gone to file it. Hasn't Mr. Jackson gone to file that declaration in Bullman and Ramsey, Mr. Wicks?' Of course I said yes, and then Fogg coughed again, and looked at Ramsey. 'My God!' said Ramsey; 'and here have I nearly driven myself mad, scraping this money together, and all to no purpose.' 'None at all,' said Fogg, coolly; 'so you had better go back and scrape some more together, and bring it here in time.' 'I can't get it, by God!' said Ramsey, striking the desk with his fist. 'Don't bully me, sir,' said Fogg, getting into a passion on purpose. 'I am not bullying you, sir,' said Ramsey. 'You are,' said Fogg; 'get out, sir; get out of this office, sir, and come back, sir, when you know how to behave yourself.' Well, Ramsey tried to speak, but Fogg wouldn't let him, so he put the money in his pocket, and sneaked out. The door was scarcely shut, when old Fogg turned round to me, with a sweet smile on his face, and drew the declaration out of his coat pocket. 'Here, Wicks,' says Fogg, 'take a cab, and go down to the Temple as quick as you can, and file that. The costs are quite safe, for he's a steady man with a large family, at a salary of five-and-twenty shillings a week, and if he gives

us a warrant of attorney, as he must in the end, I know his employers will see it paid; so we may as well get all we can out of him, Mr. Wicks; it's a Christian act to do it, Mr. Wicks, for with his large family and small income, he'll be all the better for a good lesson against getting into debt,—won't he, Mr. Wicks, won't he?"—and he smiled so good-naturedly as he went away, that it was delightful to see him. He is a capital man of business," said Wicks, in a tone of the deepest admiration, "capital, isn't he?"

The other three cordially subscribed to this opinion, and the anecdote afforded the most unlimited satisfaction.

"Nice men these here, sir," whispered Mr. Weller to his master; "wery nice notion of fun they has, sir."

Mr. Pickwick nodded assent, and coughed to attract the attention of the young gentlemen behind the partition, who, having now relaxed their minds by a little conversation among themselves, condescended to take some notice of the stranger.

"I wonder whether Fogg's disengaged now?" said Jackson.

"I'll see," said Wicks, dismounting leisurely from his stool. "What name shall I tell Mr. Fogg?"

"Pickwick," replied the illustrious subject of these memoirs.

Mr. Jackson departed up stairs on his errand, and immediately returned with a message that Mr. Fogg would see Mr. Pickwick in five minutes; and having delivered it, returned again to his desk.

"What did he say his name was?" whispered Wicks.

"Pickwick," replied Jackson; "it's the defendant in Bardell and Pickwick."

A sudden scraping of feet, mingled with the sound of suppressed laughter, was heard from behind the partition.

"They're a twiggin' of you, sir," whispered Mr. Weller.

"Twigging of me, Sam!" replied Mr. Pickwick; "what do you mean by twigging me?"

Mr. Weller replied by pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, and Mr. Pickwick, on looking up, became sensible of the pleasing fact, that all the four clerks, with countenances expressive of the utmost amusement, and with their heads thrust over the wooden screen, were minutely inspecting the figure and general appearance of the supposed trifler with female hearts, and disturber of female happiness. On his looking up, the row of heads suddenly disappeared, and the



MR. PICKWICK AND SAM IN THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

sound of pens travelling at a furious rate over paper, immediately succeeded.

A sudden ring at the bell which hung in the office, summoned Mr. Jackson to the apartment of Fogg, from whence he came back to say that he (Fogg) was ready to see Mr. Pickwick if he would step up stairs.

Up stairs Mr. Pickwick did step accordingly, leaving Sam Weller below. The room door of the one-pair back, bore inscribed in legible characters the imposing words "Mr. Fogg;" and, having tapped thereat, and been des red to come in, Jackson ushered Mr. Pickwick into the presence.

"Is Mr. Dodson in?" inquired Mr. Fogg.

"Just come in, sir," replied Jackson.

"Ask him to step here."

"Yes, sir." Exit Jackson

"Take a seat, sir," said Fogg; "there is the paper, sir; my partner will be here directly, and we can converse about this matter, sir."

Mr. Pickwick took a seat and the paper, but instead of reading the latter, peeped over the top of it, and took a survey of the man of business, who was an elderly, pimply-faced, vegetable-diet sort of man, in a black coat, dark mixture trousers, and small black gaiters; a kind of being who seemed to be an essential part of the desk at which he was writing, and to have as much thought or sentiment.

After a few minutes' silence, Mr. Dodson, a plump, portly, stern-looking man, with a loud voice, appeared; and the conversation commenced.

"This is Mr. Pickwick," said Fogg.

"Ah! You are the defendant, sir, in Bardell and Pickwick?" said Dodson.

"I am, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, sir," said Dodson, "and what do you propose?"

"Ah!" said Fogg, thrusting his hands into his trousers' pockets, and throwing himself back in his chair, "what do you propose, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Hush, Fogg," said Dodson, "let me hear what Mr. Pickwick has to say."

"I came, gentlemen," said Mr. Pickwick, gazing placidly on the two partners, "I came here, gentlemen, to express the surprise with which I received your letter of the other day, and to inquire what grounds of action you can have against me."

"Grounds of—" Fogg had ejaculated this much, when he was stopped by Dodson.

"Mr. Fogg," said Dodson, "I am going to speak."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Dodson," said Fogg.

"For the grounds of action, sir," continued Dodson, with moral elevation in his air, "you will consult your own conscience and your own feelings. We, sir, we, are guided entirely by the statement of our client. That statement, sir, may be true, or it may be false; it may be credible, or it may be incredible; but, if it be true, and if it be credible, I do not hesitate to say, sir, that our grounds of action, sir, are strong, and not to be shaken. You may be an unfortunate man, sir, or you may be a designing one; but if I were called upon, as a jurymen upon my oath, sir, to express an opinion of your conduct, sir, I do not hesitate to assert that I should have but one opinion about it." Here Dodson drew himself up, with an air of offended virtue, and looked at Fogg, who thrust his hands further in his pockets, and, nodding his head sagely, said, in a tone of the fullest concurrence, "Most certainly."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, with considerable pain depicted in his countenance, "you will permit me to assure you, that I am a most unfortunate man, so far as this case is concerned"

"I hope you are, sir," replied Dodson; "I trust you may be, sir. If you are really innocent of what is laid to your charge, you are more unfortunate than I had believed any man could possibly be. What do *you* say, Mr. Fogg?"

"I say precisely what you say," replied Fogg, with a smile of incredulity.

"The writ, sir, which commences the action," continued Dodson, "was issued regularly. Mr. Fogg, where is the *præcipe* book?"

"Here it is," said Fogg, handing over a square book, with a parchment cover.

"Here is the entry," resumed Dodson. "'Middlesex, *Capias Martha Bardell, widow, v. Samuel Pickwick*. Damages, £1500. Dodson and Fogg for the plaintiff, Aug. 28, 1830.' All regular, sir; perfectly." Dodson coughed and looked at Fogg, who said "Perfectly," also. And then they both looked at Mr. Pickwick.

"I am to understand, then," said Mr. Pickwick, "that it really is your intention to proceed with this action?"

"Understand, sir? That you certainly may," replied Dodson, with something as near a smile as his importance would allow.

"And that the damages are actually laid at fifteen hundred pounds?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"To which understanding you may add my assurance, that if we could have prevailed upon our client, they would have been laid at treble the amount, sir:" replied Dodson.

"I believe Mrs. Bardell specially said, however," observed Fogg, glancing at Dodson, "that she would not compromise for a farthing less."

"Unquestionably," replied Dodson, sternly. For the action was only just begun; and it wouldn't have done to let Mr. Pickwick compromise it then, even if he had been so disposed.

"As you offer no terms, sir," said Dodson, displaying a slip of parchment in his right hand, and affectionately pressing a paper copy of it, on Mr. Pickwick with his left, "I had better serve you with a copy of this writ, sir. Here is the original, sir."

"Very well, gentlemen, very well," said Mr. Pickwick, rising in person and wrath at the same time; "you shall hear from my solicitor, gentlemen."

"We shall be very happy to do so," said Fogg, rubbing his hands.

"Very," said Dodson, opening the door.

"And before I go, gentlemen," said the excited Mr. Pickwick, turning round on the landing. "permit me to say, that of all the disgraceful and rascally proceedings—"

"Stay, sir, stay," interposed Dodson, with great politeness. "Mr. Jackson! Mr. Wicks."

"Sir," said the two clerks, appearing at the bottom of the stairs.

"I merely want you to hear what this gentleman says," replied Dodson. "Pray, go on, sir—disgraceful and rascally proceedings, I think you said?"

"I did," said Mr. Pickwick, thoroughly roused. "I said, sir, that of all the disgraceful and rascally proceedings that ever were attempted, this is the most so. I repeat it, sir."

"You hear that, Mr. Wicks?" said Dodson.

"You won't forget these expressions, Mr. Jackson?" said Fogg.

"Perhaps you would like to call us swindlers, sir," said

Dodson. "Pray do, sir, if you feel disposed ; now pray do, sir."

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick. "You *are* swindlers."

"Very good," said Dodson. "You can hear down there, I hope, Mr. Wicks?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Wicks.

"You had better come up a step or two higher, if you can't," added Mr. Fogg. "Go on, sir ; do go on. You had better call us thieves, sir ; or perhaps you would like to assault one of us. Pray do it, sir, if you would ; we will not make the smallest resistance. Pray do it, sir."

As Fogg put himself very temptingly within the reach of Mr. Pickwick's clenched fist, there is little doubt that that gentleman would have complied with his earnest entreaty, but for the interposition of Sam, who, hearing the dispute, emerged from the office, mounted the stairs, and seized his master by the arm.

"You just come away," said Mr. Weller. "Battledore and shuttlecock's a wery good game, when you an't the shuttlecock and two lawyers the battledores, in which case it gets too excitin' to be pleasant. Come away, sir. If you want to ease your mind by blowing up somebody, come out into the court and blow up me ; but it's rayther too expensive work to be carried on here."

And without the slightest ceremony, Mr. Weller hauled his master down the stairs, and down the court, and having safely deposited him in Cornhill, fell behind, prepared to follow whithersoever he should lead.

Mr. Pickwick walked on abstractedly, crossed opposite the Mansion House, and bent his steps up Cheapside. Sam began to wonder where they were going, when his master turned round and said :

"Sam, I will go immediately to Mr. Perker's."

"That's just exactly the wery place vere you ought to have gone last night, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I think it is, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I *know* it is," said Mr. Weller.

"Well, well, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, "we will go there at once, but first, as I have been rather ruffled, I should like a glass of brandy and warm water, Sam. Where can I have it, Sam?"

Mr. Weller's knowledge of London was extensive and peculiar. He replied without the slightest consideration :

"Second court on the right hand side—last house but vun on the same side the vay—take the box as stands in the first fire-place, 'cos there an't no leg in the middle o' the table, wich all the others has, and it's verry inconvenient."

Mr. Pickwick observed his valet's directions implicitly, and bidding Sam follow him, entered the tavern he had pointed out, where the hot water and brandy was speedily placed before him; while Mr. Weller, seated at a respectful distance, though at the same table with his master, was accommodated with a pint of porter.

The room was one of a very homely description, and was apparently under the especial patronage of stage coachmen: for several gentlemen, who had all the appearance of belonging to that learned profession, were drinking and smoking in the different boxes. Among the number was one stout, red-faced, elderly man in particular, seated in an opposite box, who attracted Mr. Pickwick's attention. The stout man was smoking with great vehemence, but between every half-dozen puffs, he took his pipe from his mouth, and looked first at Mr. Weller and then at Mr. Pickwick. Then, he would bury in a quart pot, as much of his countenance as the dimensions of the quart pot admitted of its receiving, and take another look at Sam and Mr. Pickwick. Then he would take another half-dozen puffs with an air of profound meditation and look at them again. At last the stout man, putting up his legs on the seat, and leaning his back against the wall, began to puff at his pipe without leaving off at all, and to stare through the smoke at the new-comers, as if he had made up his mind to see the most he could of them.

At first the evolutions of the stout man had escaped Mr. Weller's observation, but by degrees, as he saw Mr. Pickwick's eyes every now and then turning towards him, he began to gaze in the same direction, at the same time shading his eyes with his hand, as if he partially recognised the object before him, and wished to make quite sure of its identity. His doubts were speedily dispelled, however; for the stout man having blown a thick cloud from his pipe, a hoarse voice, like some strange effort of ventriloquisin, emerged from beneath the capacious shawls which muffled his throat and chest, and slowly uttered these sounds—"Wy, Sammy!"

"Who's that, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, I wouldn't ha' believed it, sir," replied Mr. Weller with astonished eyes. "It's the old 'un."

"Old one," said Mr. Pickwick. "What old one?"

"My father, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "How are you, my ancient?" With which beautiful ebullition of filial affection, Mr. Weller made room on the seat beside him, for the stout man, who advanced pipe in mouth and pot in hand, to greet him.

"Wy, Sammy," said the father, "I han't seen you, for two year and better."

"Nor more you have, old codger," replied the son. "How's mother-in-law?"

"Wy, I'll tell you what, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, senior, with much solemnity in his manner; "there never was a nicer woman as a widder, than that 'ere second wentur o' mine—a sweet creetur she was, Sammy; all I can say on her now, is, that as she was such an uncommon pleasant widder, it's a great pity she ever changed her con-dition. She don't act as a wife, Sammy."

"Don't she, though?" inquired Mr. Weller junior.

The elder Mr. Weller shook his head, as he replied with a sigh, "I've done it once too often, Sammy; I've done it once too often. Take example by your father, my boy, and be wery careful o' widders all your life, specially if they've kept a public-house, Sammy." Having delivered this parental advice with great pathos, Mr. Weller senior re-filled his pipe from a tin box he carried in his pocket, and, lighting his fresh pipe from the ashes of the old one, commenced smoking at a great rate.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said, renewing the subject, and addressing Mr. Pickwick, after a considerable pause, "nothin' personal, I hope, sir; I hope you han't got a widder, sir."

"Not I," replied Mr. Pickwick, laughing; and while Mr. Pickwick laughed, Sam Weller informed his parent in a whisper, of the relation in which he stood towards that gentleman.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Weller, senior, taking off his hat, "I hope you've no fault to find with Sammy, sir?"

"None whatever," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Wery glad to hear it, sir," replied the old man; "I took a good deal o' pains with his eddication, sir; let him run in

the streets when he was very young, and shift for his-self. It's the only way to make a boy sharp, sir."

"Rather a dangerous process, I should imagine," said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"And not a very sure one, neither," added Mr. Weller; "I got reg'larly done the other day."

"No!" said his father.

"I did," said the son; and he proceeded to relate, in as few words as possible, how he had fallen a ready dupe to the stratagems of Job Trotter.

Mr. Weller senior listened to the tale with the most profound attention, and, at its termination, said:

"Worn't one o' these chaps slim and tall, with long hair, and the gift o' the gab very gallopin'?"

Mr. Pickwick did not quite understand the last item of description, but, comprehending the first, said "Yes" at a venture.

"T'other's a black-haired chap in mulberry livery, with a very large head?"

"Yes, yes, he is," said Mr. Pickwick and Sam, with great earnestness.

"Then I know where they are, and that's all about it," said Mr. Weller; "they're at Ipswich, safe enough, them two."

"No!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fact," said Mr. Weller, "and I'll tell you how I know it. I work an Ipswich coach now and then for a friend o' mine. I worked down the very day arter the night as you caught the rheumatiz, and at the Black Boy at Chelmsford—the very place they'd come to—I took 'em up, right through to Ipswich, where the man servant—him in the mulberries—told me they was a goin' to put up for a long time."

"I'll follow him," said Mr. Pickwick; "we may as well see Ipswich as any other place. I'll follow him."

"You're quite certain it was them, governor?" inquired Mr. Weller, junior.

"Quite, Sammy, quite," replied his father, "for their appearance is very sing'ler; besides that 'ere, I wondered to see the gen'l'm'n so formiliar with his servant; and, more than that, as they sat in front, right behind the box, I heerd 'em laughing, and saying how they'd done old Fireworks."

"Old who?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Old Fireworks, sir; by which, I've no doubt, they meant you, sir."

There is nothing positively vile or atrocious in the appellation of "old Fireworks," but still it is by no means a respectful or flattering designation. The recollection of all the wrongs he had sustained at Jingle's hands had crowded on Mr. Pickwick's mind, the moment Mr. Weller began to speak: it wanted but a feather to turn the scale, and "old Fireworks" did it.

"I'll follow him," said Mr. Pickwick, with an emphatic blow on the table.

"I shall work down to Ipswich the day arter to-morrow, sir," said Mr. Weller the elder, "from the Bull in White-chapel; and if you really mean to go, you'd better go with me."

"So we had," said Mr. Pickwick; "very true; I can write to Bury, and tell them to meet me at Ipswich. We will go with you. But don't hurry away, Mr. Weller; won't you take anything?"

"You're wery good, sir," replied Mr. W., stopping short; "perhaps a small glass of brandy to drink your health, and success to Sammy, sir, wouldn't be amiss."

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Pickwick. "A glass of brandy here!" The brandy was brought: and Mr. Weller, after pulling his hair to Mr. Pickwick, and nodding to Sam, jerked it down his capacious throat as if it had been a small thimble-full.

"Well done, father," said Sam, "take care, old fellow, or you'll have a touch of your old complaint, the gout."

"I've found a sov'rin' cure for that, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, setting down the glass.

"A sovereign cure for the gout," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily producing his note-book—"what is it?"

"The gout, sir," replied Mr. Weller, "the gout is a complaint as arises from too much ease and comfort. If ever you're attacked with the gout, sir, jist you marry a widdier as has got a good loud voice, with a decent notion of usin' it, and you'll never have the gout agin. It's a capital prescription, sir. I takes it reg'lar, and I can warrant it to drive away any illness as is caused by too much jollity." Having imparted this valuable secret, Mr. Weller drained his glass once more, produced a laboured wink, sighed deeply, and slowly retired.

"Well, what do you think of what your father says, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"Think, sir!" replied Mr. Weller; "why, I think he's the wictim o' connubiality, as Blue Beard's domestic chaplain said, with a tear of pity, ven he buried him."

There was no replying to this very apposite conclusion, and, therefore, Mr. Pickwick, after settling the reckoning, resumed his walk to Gray's Inn. By the time he reached its secluded groves, however, eight o'clock had struck, and the unbroken stream of gentlemen in muddy high-lows, soiled white hats, and rusty apparel, who were pouring towards the different avenues of egress, warned him that the majority of the offices had closed for that day.

After climbing two pairs of steep and dirty stairs, he found his anticipations were realised. Mr. Perker's "outer door" was closed; and the dead silence which followed Mr. Weller's repeated kicks thereat, announced that the officials had retired from business for the night.

"This is pleasant, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick; "I shouldn't lose an hour in seeing him; I shall not be able to get one wink of sleep to night, I know, unless I have the satisfaction of reflecting that I have confided this matter to a professional man."

"Here's an old 'ooman comin' up-stairs, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "p'raps she knows where we can find somebody. Hallo, old lady, vere's Mr. Perker's people?"

"Mr. Perker's people," said a thin, miserable-looking old woman, stopping to recover breath after the ascent of the staircase, "Mr. Perker's people's gone, and I'm a goin' to do the office out."

"Are you Mr. Perker's servant?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"I am Mr. Perker's laundress," replied the old woman.

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, half aside to Sam, "it's a curious circumstance, Sam, that they call the old women in these inns, laundresses. I wonder what's that for?"

"'Cos they has a mortal awersion to washing anythin'." I suppose, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Pickwick, looking at the old woman, whose appearance, as well as the condition of the office, which she had by this time opened, indicated a rooted antipathy to the application of soap and water; "do you know where I can find Mr. Perker, my good woman?"

"No, I don't," replied the old woman, gruffly; "he's out o' town now."

"That's unfortunate," said Mr. Pickwick; "where's his clerk? Do you know?"

"Yes, I know where he is, but he won't thank me for telling you," replied the laundress.

"I have very particular business with him," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Won't it do in the morning?" said the woman.

"Not so well," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Well," said the old woman, "if it was anything very particular, I was to say where he was, so I suppose there's no harm in telling. If you just go to the Magpie and Stump, and ask at the bar for Mr. Lowten, they'll show you in to him, and he's Mr. Perker's clerk."

With this direction, and having been furthermore informed that the hostelry in question was situated in a court, happy in the double advantage of being in the vicinity of Clare Market, and closely approximating to the back of New Inn, Mr. Pickwick and Sam descended the rickety staircase in safety, and issued forth in quest of the Magpie and Stump.

This favoured tavern, sacred to the evening orgies of Mr. Lowten and his companions, was what ordinary people would designate a public-house. That the landlord was a man of a money-making turn, was sufficiently testified by the fact of a small bulk-head beneath the tap-room window, in size and shape not unlike a sedan-chair, being underlet to a mender of shoes: and that he was a being of a philanthropic mind, was evident from the protection he afforded to a pie-man, who vended his delicacies without fear of interruption on the very door-step. In the lower windows, which were decorated with curtains of a saffron hue, dangled two or three printed cards, bearing reference to Devonshire cyder and Dantzic spruce, while a large black board, announcing in white letters to an enlightened public that there were 500,000 barrels of double stout in the cellars of the establishment, left the mind in a state of not unpleasing doubt and uncertainty as to the precise direction in the bowels of the earth, in which this mighty cavern might be supposed to extend. When we add, that the weather-beaten sign-board bore the half-obliterated semblance of a magpie intently eyeing a crooked streak of brown paint, which the neighbours had been taught from infancy to consider as the "stump," we have said all that need be said of the exterior of the edifice.

On Mr. Pickwick's presenting himself at the bar, an elderly female emerged from behind a screen therein, and presented herself before him.

"Is Mr. Lowten here, ma'am?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes he is, sir," replied the landlady. "Here, Charley, show the gentleman in, to Mr. Lowten."

"The gen'l'm'n can't go in just now," said a shambling pot-boy, with a red head, "'cos Mr. Lowten's a singin' a comic song, and he'll put him out. He'll be done d'rectly, sir."

The red-headed pot-boy had scarcely finished speaking, when a most unanimous hammering of tables, and jingling of glasses, announced that the song had that instant terminated; and Mr. Pickwick, after desiring Sam to solace himself in the tap, suffered himself to be conducted into the presence of Mr. Lowten.

At the announcement of "gentleman to speak to you, sir," a puffy-faced young man, who filled the chair at the head of the table, looked with some surprise in the direction from whence the voice proceeded: and the surprise seemed to be by no means diminished, when his eyes rested on an individual whom he had never seen before.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "and I am very sorry to disturb the other gentlemen, too, but I come on very particular business; and if you will suffer me to detain you at this end of the room for five minutes, I shall be very much obliged to you."

The puffy-faced young man rose, and drawing a chair close to Mr. Pickwick in an obscure corner of the room, listened attentively to his tale of woe.

"Ah," he said, when Mr. Pickwick had concluded, "Dodson and Fogg—sharp practice theirs—capital men of business, Dodson and Fogg, sir."

Mr. Pickwick admitted the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg, and Lowten resumed.

"Perker ain't in town, and he won't be, neither, before the end of next week; but if you want the action defended, and will leave the copy with me, I can do all that's needful till he comes back."

"That's exactly what I came here for," said Mr. Pickwick, handing over the document. "If anything particular occurs, you can write to me at the post-office, Ipswich."

CHAPTER XXII

MR. PICKWICK JOURNEYS TO IPSWICH, AND MEETS WITH
A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE WITH A MIDDLE-AGED
LADY IN YELLOW CURL PAPERS

"THAT 'ere your governor's luggage, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller of his affectionate son, as he entered the yard of the Bull inn, Whitechapel, with a travelling bag and a small portmanteau.

"You might ha' made a worser guess than that, old feller," replied Mr. Weller the younger, setting down his burden in the yard, and sitting himself down upon it afterwards. "The Governor hisself'll be down here presently."

"He's a cabbin' it, I suppose?" said the father.

"Yes, he's a havin' two mile o' danger at eight-pence," responded the son. "How's mother-in-law this mornin'?"

"Queer, Sammy, queer," replied the elder Mr. Weller, with impressive gravity. "She's been gettin' rayther in the Methodistical order lately, Sammy; and she is uncommon pious, to be sure. She's too good a creetur for me, Sammy. I feel I don't deserve her."

"Ah," said Mr. Samuel, "that's wery self-denyin' o' you."

"Wery," replied his parent, with a sigh. "She's got hold o' some invention for grown-up people being born again, Sammy; the new birth, I thinks they calls it. I should wery much like to see that system in haction, Sammy. I should wery much like to see your mother-in-law born again. Wouldn't I put her out to nurse!"

"What do you think them women does t'other day," continued Mr. Weller, after a short pause, during which he had significantly struck the side of his nose with his fore-finger some half-dozen times. "What do you think they does, t'other day, Sammy?"

"Don't know," replied Sammy, "what?"

"Goes and gets up a grand tea drinkin' for a feller they calls their shepherd," said Mr. Weller. "I was a standing starin' in at the pictur shop down at our place, when I sees a little bill about it; 'tickets half-a-crown. All applications to be made to the committee. Secretary, Mrs. Weller;' and when I got home there was the committee a sittin' in our back parlour. Fourteen women; I wish you could ha' heard 'em, Sammy. There they was, a passin' resolutions, and wotin' supplies, and all sorts o' games. Well, what with your mother-in-law a worryin' me to go, and what with my looking for'ard to seein' some queer starts if I did. I put my name down for a ticket; at six o'clock on the Friday evenin' I dresses myself out very smart, and off I goes with the old 'ooman, and up we walks into a fust floor where there was tea things for thirty, and a whole lot o' women as begins whisperin' at one another, and lookin' at me, as if they'd never seen a rayther stout gen'l'm'n of eight-and-fifty afore. By and bye, there comes a great bustle down stairs, and a lanky chap with a red nose and a white neckcloth rushes up, and sings out, 'Here's the shepherd a coming to visit his faithful flock;' and in comes a fat chap in black, vith a great white face, a smilin' away like clockwork. Such goin's on, Sammy! 'The kiss of peace,' says the shepherd; and then he kissed the women all round, and ven he'd done, the man vith the red nose began. I was just a thinkin' whether I hadn't better begin too—'specially as there was a verry nice lady a sittin' next me—ven in comes the tea, and your mother-in-law, as had been makin' the kettle bile down stairs. At it they went, tooth and nail. Such a precious loud hymn, Sammy, while the tea was a brewing; such a grace, such eatin' and drinkin'! I wish you could ha' seen the shepherd walkin' into the ham and muffins. I never see such a chap to eat and drink; never. The red-nosed man warn't by no means the sort of person you'd like to grub by contract, but he was nothin' to the shepherd. Well; arter the tea was over, they sang another hymn, and then the shepherd began to preach: and verry well he did it, considerin' how heavy them muffins must have lied on his chest. Presently he pulls up, all of a sudden, and hollers out 'Where is the sinner; where is the mis'erable sinner?' Upon which, all the women looked at me, and began to groan as if they was a dyin'. I thought it was rather sing'ler, but hows'ever, I says nothing. Presently he pulls up again, and lookin'

wery hard at me, says, 'Where is the sinner; where is the mis'rable sinner?' and all the women groans again, ten times louder than afore. I got rather wild at this, so I takes a step or two for'ard and says, 'My friend,' says I, 'did you apply that 'ere obserwation to me?' 'Stead of begging my pardon as any gen'l'm'n would ha' done, he got more abusive than ever: called me a wessel, Sammy—a wessel of wrath—and all sorts o' names. So my blood being reg'larly up, I first give him two or three for himself, and then two or three more to hand over to the man with the red nose, and walked off. I wish you could ha' heard how the women screamed, Sammy, ven they picked up the shepherd from under the table—Hallo! here's the governor, the size of life."

As Mr. Weller spoke, Mr. Pickwick dismounted from a cab, and entered the yard.

"Fine mornin', sir," said Mr. Weller senior.

"Beautiful indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Beautiful indeed," echoed a red-haired man with an inquisitive nose and blue spectacles, who had unpacked himself from a cab at the same moment as Mr. Pickwick. "Going to Ipswich, sir?"

"I am," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Extraordinary coincidence. So am I."

Mr. Pickwick bowed.

"Going outside?" said the red-haired man.

Mr. Pickwick bowed again.

"Bless my soul, how remarkable—I am going outside, too," said the red-haired man: "we are positively going together." And the red-haired man, who was an important-looking, sharp-nosed, mysterious-spoken personage, with a bird-like habit of giving his head a jerk every time he said anything, smiled as if he had made one of the strangest discoveries that ever fell to the lot of human wisdom.

"I am happy in the prospect of your company, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah," said the new-comer, "it's a good thing for both of us, isn't it? Company, you see—company is—is—it's a very different thing from solitude—ain't it?"

"There's no denying that 'ere," said Mr. Weller, joining in the conversation, with an affable smile. "That's what I call a self-evident proposition, as the dog's-meat man said, when the housemaid told him he warn't a gentleman."

"Ah," said the red-haired man, surveying Mr. Weller from head to foot with a supercilious look. "Friend of yours, sir?"

"Not exactly a friend," replied Mr. Pickwick in a low tone. "The fact is, he is my servant, but I allow him to take a good many liberties; for, between ourselves, I flatter myself he is an original, and I am rather proud of him."

"Ah," said the red-haired man, "that, you see, is a matter of taste. I am not fond of anything original; I don't like it; don't see the necessity for it. What's your name, sir?"

"Here is my card, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, much amused by the abruptness of the question, and the singular manner of the stranger.

"Ah," said the red-haired man, placing the card in his pocket-book, "Pickwick; very good. I like to know a man's name, it saves so much trouble. That's my card, sir, Magnus, you will perceive, sir—Magnus is my name. It's rather a good name, I think, sir?"

"A very good name, indeed," said Mr. Pickwick, wholly unable to repress a smile.

"Yes, I think it is," resumed Mr. Magnus. "There's a good name before it, too, you will observe. Permit me, sir—if you hold the card a little slanting, this way, you catch the light upon the up-stroke. There—Peter Magnus—sounds well, I think, sir."

"Very," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Curious circumstance about those initials, sir," said Mr. Magnus. "You will observe—P.M.—post meridian. In hasty notes to intimate acquaintance, I sometimes sign myself 'Afternoon.' It amuses my friends very much, Mr. Pickwick."

"It is calculated to afford them the highest gratification, I should conceive," said Mr. Pickwick, rather envying the ease with which Mr. Magnus's friends were entertained.

"Now, gen'l'm'n," said the hostler, "coach is ready, if you please."

"Is all my luggage in?" inquired Mr. Magnus.

"All right, sir."

"Is the red bag in?"

"All right, sir."

"And the striped bag?"

"Fore boot, sir."

"And the brown-paper parcel?"

"Under the seat, sir."

"And the leather hat-box?"

"They're all in, sir."

"Now, will you get up?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Excuse me," replied Magnus, standing on the wheel.

"Excuse me, Mr. Pickwick. I cannot consent to get up, in this state of uncertainty. I am quite satisfied from that man's manner, that that leather hat-box is *not* in."

The solemn protestations of the hostler being wholly unavailing, the leather hat-box was obliged to be raked up from the lowest depth of the boot, to satisfy him that it had been safely packed; and after he had been assured on this head, he felt a solemn presentiment, first, that the red bag was mislaid, and, next that the striped bag had been stolen, and then that the brown-paper parcel "had come untied." At length when he had received ocular demonstration of the groundless nature of each and every of these suspicions, he consented to climb up to the roof of the coach, observing that now he had taken every thing off his mind, he felt quite comfortable and happy.

"You're given to nervousness, an't you, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller senior, eyeing the stranger askance, as he mounted to his place.

"Yes; I always am rather, about these little matters," said the stranger, "but I am all right now—quite right."

"Well, that's a blessin'," said Mr. Weller. "Sammy, help your master up to the box: t'other leg, sir, that's it; give us your hand, sir. Up with you. You was a lighter weight when you was a boy, sir."

"True enough, that, Mr. Weller," said the breathless Mr. Pickwick, good humouredly, as he took his seat on the box beside him.

"Jump up in front, Sammy," said Mr. Weller. "Now Villam, run 'em out. Take care o' the archvay, gen'l'm'n. 'Heads,' as the pieman says. That'll do, Villam. Let 'em alone." And away went the coach up Whitechapel, to the admiration of the whole population of that pretty-densely populated quarter.

"Not a wery nice neighbourhood this, sir," said Sam, with a touch of the hat, which always preceded his entering into conversation with his master.

"It is not indeed, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, surveying

the crowded and filthy street through which they were passing.

"It's a wery remarkable circumstance, sir," said Sam, "that poverty and oysters always seems to go together."

"I don't understand you, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"What I mean, sir," said Sam, "is, that the poorer a place is, the greater call there seems to be for oysters. Look here, sir; here's a oyster stall to every half-dozen houses. The street's lined vith 'em. Blessed if I don't think that ven a man's wery poor, he rushes out of his lodgings, and eats oysters in reglar desperation."

"To be sure he does," said Mr. Weller senior; "and t's just the same vith pickled salmon!"

"Those are two very remarkable facts, which never occurred to me before," said Mr. Pickwick. "The very first place we stop at, I'll make a note of them."

By this time they had reached the turnpike at Mile End; a profound silence prevailed until they had got two or three miles further on, when Mr. Weller senior, turning suddenly to Mr. Pickwick, said:

"Wery queer life is a pike-keeper's, sir."

"A what?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"A pike-keeper."

"What do you mean by a pike-keeper?" inquired Mr. Peter Magnus.

"The old 'un means a turnpike keeper, gen'l'm'n," observed Mr. Samuel Weller, in explanation.

"Oh," said Mr. Pickwick, "I see. Yes; very curious life. Very uncomfortable."

"They're all on 'em men as has met vith some disappointment in life," said Mr. Weller senior.

"Ay, ay?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes. Consequence of vich, they retires from the world, and shuts themselves up in pikes; partly vith the view of being solitary, and partly to rewenge themselves on mankind, by takin' tolls."

"Dear me," said Mr. Pickwick, "I never knew that before."

"Fact, sir," said Mr. Weller; "if they was gen'l'm'n you'd call 'em misanthropes, but as it is, they only takes to pike-keepin'."

With such conversation, possessing the inestimable charm of blending amusement with instruction, did Mr. Weller beguile the tediousness of the journey, during the greater

part of the day. Topics of conversation were never wanting, for even when any pause occurred in Mr. Weller's loquacity, it was abundantly supplied by the desire evinced by Mr. Magnus to make himself acquainted with the whole of the personal history of his fellow-travellers, and his loudly-expressed anxiety at every stage, respecting the safety and well-being of the two bags, the leather hat-box, and the brown-paper parcel.

In the main street of Ipswich, on the left-hand side of the way, a short distance after you have passed through the open space fronting the Town Hall, stands an inn known far and wide by the appellation of The Great White Horse, rendered the more conspicuous by a stone statue of some rampacious animal with flowing mane and tail, distantly resembling an insane cart-horse, which is elevated above the principal door. The Great White Horse is famous in the neighbourhood, in the same degree as a prize ox, or county paper-chronicled turnip, or unwieldy pig—for its enormous size. Never were such labyrinths of uncarpeted passages, such clusters of mouldy, ill-lighted rooms, such huge numbers of small dens for eating or sleeping in, beneath any one roof, as are collected together between the four walls of the Great White Horse at Ipswich.

It was at the door of this overgrown tavern that the London coach stopped, at the same hour every evening; and it was from this same London coach, that Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, and Mr. Peter Magnus dismounted, on the particular evening to which this chapter of our history bears reference.

"Do you stop here, sir?" inquired Mr. Peter Magnus, when the striped bag, and the red bag, and the brown-paper parcel, and the leather hat-box, had all been deposited in the passage. "Do you stop here, sir?"

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Dear me," said Mr. Magnus, "I never knew anything like these extraordinary coincidences. Why, I stop here too. I hope we dine together?"

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick. "I am not quite certain whether I have any friends here or not, though. Is there any gentleman of the name of Tupman here, waiter?"

A corpulent man, with a fortnight's napkin under his arm, and coeval stockings on his legs, slowly desisted from his occupation of staring down the street, on this question being

put to him by Mr. Pickwick; and, after minutely inspecting that gentleman's appearance, from the crown of his hat to the lowest button of his gaiters, replied emphatically:

"No."

"Nor any gentleman of the name of Snodgrass?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"No!"

"Nor Winkle?"

"No."

"My friends have not arrived to-day, sir," said Mr. Pickwick. "We will dine alone, then. Shew us a private room, waiter."

On this request being preferred, the corpulent man condescended to order the boots to bring in the gentlemen's luggage; and preceding them down a long dark passage, ushered them into a large badly-furnished apartment, with a dirty grate, in which a small fire was making a wretched attempt to be cheerful, but was fast sinking beneath the dispiriting influence of the place. After the lapse of an hour, a bit of fish and a steak were served up to the travellers, and when the dinner was cleared away, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Peter Magnus drew their chairs up to the fire, and having ordered a bottle of the worst possible port wine, at the highest possible price, for the good of the house, drank brandy and water for their own.

Mr. Peter Magnus was naturally of a very communicative disposition, and the brandy and water operated with wonderful effect in warming into life the deepest hidden secrets of his bosom. After sundry accounts of himself, his family, his connexions, his friends, his jokes, his business, and his brothers (most talkative men have a great deal to say about their brothers), Mr. Peter Magnus took a blue view of Mr. Pickwick through his coloured spectacles for several minutes, and then said, with an air of modesty:

"And what do you think—what *do* you think, Mr. Pickwick—I have come down here for?"

"Upon my word," said Mr. Pickwick, "it is wholly impossible for me to guess: on business, perhaps."

"Partly right, sir," replied Mr. Peter Magnus, "but partly wrong, at the same time: try again, Mr. Pickwick."

"Really," said Mr. Pickwick, "I must throw myself on your mercy, to tell me or not, as you may think best: for I should never guess, if I were to try all night."

"Why, then, he—he—he!" said Mr. Peter Magnus, with a bashful titter, "what should you think, Mr. Pickwick, if I had come down here, to make a proposal, sir, eh? He—he—he!"

"Think! That you are very likely to succeed," replied Mr. Pickwick, with one of his beaming smiles.

"Ah!" said Mr. Magnus. "But do you really think so, Mr. Pickwick? Do you, though?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No; but you're joking, though."

"I am not, indeed."

"Why, then," said Mr. Magnus, "to let you into a little secret, *I* think so too. I don't mind telling you, Mr. Pickwick, although I'm dreadful jealous by nature—horrid—that the lady is in this house." Here Mr. Magnus took off his spectacles, on purpose to wink, and then put them on again.

"That's what you were running out of the room for, before dinner, then, so often," said Mr. Pickwick, archly.

"Hush! Yes, you're right, that was it; not such a fool as to see her, though."

"No!"

"No; wouldn't do, you know, after having just come off a journey. Wait till to-morrow, sir; double the chance then. Mr. Pickwick, sir, there is a suit of clothes in that bag, and a hat in that box, which I expect, in the effect they will produce, will be invaluable to me, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes; you must have observed my anxiety about them to-day. I do not believe that such another suit of clothes, and such a hat, could be bought for money, Mr. Pickwick."

Mr. Pickwick congratulated the fortunate owner of the irresistible garments, on their acquisition; and Mr. Peter Magnus remained for a few moments apparently absorbed in contemplation.

"She's a fine creature," said Mr. Magnus.

"Is she?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very," said Mr. Magnus, "very. She lives about twenty miles from here, Mr. Pickwick. I heard she would be here to-night and all to-morrow forenoon, and came down to seize the opportunity. I think an inn is a good sort of a place to propose to a single woman in, Mr. Pickwick. She is more likely to feel the loneliness of her situation in travelling,

perhaps, than she would be at home. What do you think, Mr. Pickwick?"

"I think it very probable," replied that gentleman.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pickwick," said Mr. Peter Magnus, "but I am naturally rather curious; what may *you* have come down here for?"

"On a far less pleasant errand, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, the colour mounting to his face at the recollection. "I have come down here, sir, to expose the treachery and falsehood of an individual, upon whose truth and honour I placed implicit reliance."

"Dear me," said Mr. Peter Magnus, "that's very unpleasant. It is a lady, I presume? Eh? ah! Sly, Mr. Pickwick, sly. Well, Mr. Pickwick, sir, I wouldn't probe your feelings for the world. Painful subjects, these, sir, very painful. Don't mind me, Mr. Pickwick, if you wish to give vent to your feelings. I know what it is to be jilted, sir; I have endured that sort of thing three or four times."

"I am much obliged to you, for your condolence on what you presume to be my melancholy case," said Mr. Pickwick, winding up his watch, and laying it on the table, "but—"

"No, no," said Mr. Peter Magnus, "not a word more: it's a painful subject. I see, I see. What's the time, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Past twelve."

"Dear me, it's time to go to bed. It will never do, sitting here. I shall be pale to-morrow, Mr. Pickwick."

At the bare notion of such a calamity, Mr. Peter Magnus rang the bell for the chamber-maid; and the striped bag, the red bag, the leathern hat-box, and the brown-paper parcel, having been conveyed to his bed-room, he retired in company with a japanned candlestick, to one side of the house, while Mr. Pickwick, and another japanned candlestick, were conducted through a multitude of tortuous windings, to another.

"This is your room, sir," said the chamber-maid.

"Very well," replied Mr. Pickwick, looking round him. It was a tolerably large double-bedded room, with a fire; upon the whole, a more comfortable-looking apartment than Mr. Pickwick's short experience of the accommodations of the Great White Horse had led him to expect.

"Nobody sleeps in the other bed, of course," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, no, sir."

"Very good. Tell my servant to bring me up some hot water at half-past eight in the morning, and that I shall not want him any more to-night."

"Yes, sir." And bidding Mr. Pickwick good night, the chamber-maid retired, and left him alone.

Mr. Pickwick sat himself down in a chair before the fire, and fell into a train of rambling meditations. First he thought of his friends, and wondered when they would join him; then his mind reverted to Mrs. Martha Bardell; and from that lady it wandered, by a natural process, to the dingy counting-house of Dodson and Fogg. From Dodson and Fogg's it flew off at a tangent; then it came back to the Great White Horse at Ipswich, with sufficient clearness to convince Mr. Pickwick that he was falling asleep. So he roused himself, and began to undress, when he recollected he had left his watch on the table down stairs.

Now, this watch was a special favourite with Mr. Pickwick, having been carried about, beneath the shadow of his waistcoat, for a greater number of years than we feel called upon to state at present. The possibility of going to sleep, unless it were ticking gently beneath his pillow, or in the watch-pocket over his head, had never entered Mr. Pickwick's brain. So as it was pretty late now, and he was unwilling to ring his bell at that hour of the night, he slipped on his coat, of which he had just divested himself, and taking the japanned candlestick in his hand, walked quietly down stairs.

The more stairs Mr. Pickwick went down, the more stairs there seemed to be to descend, and again and again, when Mr. Pickwick got into some narrow passage, and began to congratulate himself on having gained the ground-floor, did another flight of stairs appear before his astonished eyes. At last he reached a stone hall, which he remembered to have seen when he entered the house. Passage after passage did he explore; room after room did he peep into; at length, as he was on the point of giving up the search in despair, he opened the door of the identical room in which he had spent the evening, and beheld his missing property on the table.

Mr. Pickwick seized the watch in triumph, and proceeded to re-trace his steps to his bed-chamber. If his progress downward had been attended with difficulties and uncer-

tainty, his journey back was infinitely more perplexing. Rows of doors, garnished with boots of every shape, make, and size, branched off in every possible direction. A dozen times did he softly turn the handle of some bed-room door which resembled his own, when a gruff cry from within of "Who the devil's that?" or "What do you want here?" caused him to steal away, on tiptoe, with a perfectly marvellous celerity. He was reduced to the verge of despair, when an open door attracted his attention. He peeped in. Right at last! There were the two beds, whose situation he perfectly remembered, and the fire still burning. His candle, not a long one when he first received it, had flickered away in the drafts of air through which he had passed, and sank into the socket as he closed the door after him. "No matter," said Mr. Pickwick, "I can undress myself just as well by the light of the fire."

The bedsteads stood one on each side of the door; and on the inner side of each was a little path, terminating in a rush-bottomed chair, just wide enough to admit of a person's getting into, or out of bed, on that side, if he or she thought proper. Having carefully drawn the curtains of his bed on the outside, Mr. Pickwick sat down on the rush-bottomed chair, and leisurely divested himself of his shoes and gaiters. He then took off and folded up his coat, waistcoat, and neckcloth, and slowly drawing on his tasselled night-cap, secured it firmly on his head, by tying beneath his chin the strings which he always had attached to that article of dress. It was at this moment that the absurdity of his recent bewilderment struck upon his mind. Throwing himself back in the rush-bottomed chair, Mr. Pickwick laughed to himself so heartily, that it would have been quite delightful to any man of well-constituted mind to have watched the smiles that expanded his amiable features as they shone forth from beneath the night-cap.

"It is the best idea," said Mr. Pickwick to himself, smiling till he almost cracked the night-cap strings: "It is the best idea, my losing myself in this place, and wandering about those staircases, that I ever heard of. Droll, droll, very droll." Here Mr. Pickwick smiled again, a broader smile than before, and was about to continue the process of undressing, in the best possible humour, when he was suddenly stopped by a most unexpected interruption; to wit, the entrance into the room of some person with

a candle, who, after locking the door, advanced to the dressing table, and set down the light upon it.

The smile that played on Mr. Pickwick's features was instantaneously lost in a look of the most unbounded and wonder-stricken surprise. The person, whoever it was, had come in so suddenly and with so little noise, that Mr. Pickwick had had no time to call out, or oppose their entrance. Who could it be? A robber? Some evil-minded person who had seen him come up stairs with a handsome watch in his hand, perhaps. What was he to do!

The only way in which Mr. Pickwick could catch a glimpse of his mysterious visitor with the least danger of being seen himself, was by creeping on to the bed, and peeping out from between the curtains on the opposite side. To this manœuvre he accordingly resorted. Keeping the curtains carefully closed with his hand, so that nothing more of him could be seen than his face and night-cap, and putting on his spectacles, he mustered up courage, and looked out.

Mr. Pickwick almost fainted with horror and dismay. Standing before the dressing-glass was a middle-aged lady, in yellow curl-papers, busily engaged in brushing what ladies call their "back-hair." However the unconscious middle-aged lady came into that room, it was quite clear that she contemplated remaining there for the night; for she had brought a rushlight and shade with her, which, with praiseworthy precaution against fire, she had stationed in a basin on the floor, where it was glimmering away, like a gigantic lighthouse in a particularly small piece of water.

"Bless my soul," thought Mr. Pickwick, "what a dreadful thing!"

"Hem!" said the lady; and in went Mr. Pickwick's head with automaton-like rapidity.

"I never met with anything so awful as this," thought poor Mr. Pickwick, the cold perspiration starting in drops upon his night-cap. "Never. This is fearful."

It was quite impossible to resist the urgent desire to see what was going forward. So out went Mr. Pickwick's head again. The prospect was worse than before. The middle-aged lady had finished arranging her hair; had carefully enveloped it in a muslin night-cap with a small plaited border; and was gazing pensively on the fire.

"This matter is growing alarming," reasoned Mr. Pickwick with himself. "I can't allow things to go on in this way."



THE MIDDLE-AGED LADY IN THE DOUBLE-BEDDED ROOM

By the self-possession of that lady it is clear to me that I must have come into the wrong room. If I call out she'll alarm the house ; but if I remain here the consequences will be still more frightful."

Mr. Pickwick, it is quite unnecessary to say, was one of the most modest and delicate-minded of mortals. The very idea of exhibiting his night-cap to a lady overpowered him, but he had tied those confounded strings in a knot, and, do what he would, he couldn't get it off. The disclosure must be made. There was only one other way of doing it. He shrunk behind the curtains, and called out very loudly :

"Ha—hum !"

That the lady started at this unexpected sound was evident, by her falling up against the rushlight shade ; that she persuaded herself it must have been the effect of imagination was equally clear, for when Mr. Pickwick, under the impression that she had fainted away stone-dead from fright, ventured to peep out again, she was gazing pensively on the fire as before.

"Most extraordinary female this," thought Mr. Pickwick, popping in again. "Ha—hum !"

These last sounds, so like those in which, as legends inform us, the ferocious giant Blunderbore was in the habit of expressing his opinion that it was time to lay the cloth, were too distinctly audible to be again mistaken for the workings of fancy.

"Gracious Heaven !" said the middle-aged lady, "what's that ?"

"It's—it's—only a gentleman, Ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick from behind the curtains.

"A gentleman !" said the lady with a terrific scream.

"It's all over !" thought Mr. Pickwick.

"A strange man !" shrieked the lady. Another instant and the house would be alarmed. Her garments rustled as she rushed towards the door.

"Ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, thrusting out his head, in the extremity of his desperation, "Ma'am !"

Now, although Mr. Pickwick was not actuated by any definite object in putting out his head, it was instantaneously productive of a good effect. The lady, as we have already stated, was near the door. She must pass it, to reach the staircase, and she would most undoubtedly have done so by this time, had not the sudden apparition of Mr. Pickwick's

night-cap driven her back into the remotest corner of the apartment, where she stood staring wildly at Mr. Pickwick, while Mr. Pickwick in his turn stared wildly at her.

"Wretch," said the lady, covering her eyes with her hands, "what do you want here?"

"Nothing, Ma'am; nothing, whatever, Ma'am;" said Mr. Pickwick earnestly.

"Nothing!" said the lady, looking up.

"Nothing, Ma'am, upon my honour," said Mr. Pickwick, nodding his head so energetically that the tassel of his night-cap danced again. "I am almost ready to sink, Ma'am, beneath the confusion of addressing a lady in my night-cap (here the lady hastily snatched off hers), but I can't get it off, Ma'am (here Mr. Pickwick gave it a tremendous tug, in proof of the statement). It is evident to me, Ma'am, now, that I have mistaken this bed-room for my own. I had not been here five minutes, Ma'am, when you suddenly entered it."

"If this improbable story be really true, sir," said the lady, sobbing violently, "you will leave it instantly."

"I will, Ma'am, with the greatest pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Instantly, sir," said the lady.

"Certainly, Ma'am," interposed Mr. Pickwick very quickly. "Certainly, Ma'am. I—I—am very sorry, Ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, making his appearance at the bottom of the bed, "to have been the innocent occasion of this alarm and emotion; deeply sorry, Ma'am."

The lady pointed to the door. One excellent quality of Mr. Pickwick's character was beautifully displayed at this moment, under the most trying circumstances. Although he had hastily put on his hat over his night-cap, after the manner of the old patrol; although he carried his shoes and gaiters in his hand, and his coat and waistcoat over his arm; nothing could subdue his native politeness.

"I am exceedingly sorry, Ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, bowing very low.

"If you are, sir, you will at once leave the room," said the lady.

"Immediately, Ma'am; this instant, Ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, opening the door, and dropping both his shoes with a crash in so doing.

"I trust, Ma'am," resumed Mr. Pickwick, gathering up

his shoes, and turning round to bow again: "I trust, Ma'am, that my unblemished character, and the devoted respect I entertain for your sex, will plead as some slight excuse for this"—But before Mr. Pickwick could conclude the sentence the lady had thrust him into the passage, and locked and bolted the door behind him.

Whatever grounds of self-congratulation Mr. Pickwick might have for having escaped so quietly from his late awkward situation, his present position was by no means enviable. He was alone, in an open passage, in a strange house, in the middle of the night, half dressed; it was not to be supposed that he could find his way in perfect darkness to a room which he had been wholly unable to discover with a light, and if he made the slightest noise in his fruitless attempts to do so, he stood every chance of being shot at, and perhaps killed, by some wakeful traveller. He had no resource but to remain where he was until daylight appeared. So after groping his way a few paces down the passage, and, to his infinite alarm, stumbling over several pairs of boots in so doing, Mr. Pickwick crouched into a little recess in the wall, to wait for morning as philosophically as he might.

He was not destined, however, to undergo this additional trial of patience: for he had not been long ensconced in his present concealment when, to his unspeakable horror, a man, bearing a light, appeared at the end of the passage. His horror was suddenly converted into joy, however, when he recognised the form of his faithful attendant. It was indeed Mr. Samuel Weller, who after sitting up thus late, in conversation with the Boots, who was sitting up for the mail, was now about to retire to rest.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, suddenly appearing before him, "where's my bed-room?"

Mr. Weller stared at his master with the most emphatic surprise; and it was not until the question had been repeated three several times, that he turned round, and led the way to the long-sought apartment.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick as he got into bed, "I have made one of the most extraordinary mistakes to-night, that ever were heard of."

"Wery likely, sir," replied Mr. Weller drily.

"But of this I am determined, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick; "that if I were to stop in this house for six months, I would never trust myself about it, alone, again."

“That’s the wery prudentest resolution as you could come to, sir,” replied Mr. Weller. “You rayther want somebody to look arter you, sir, wen your judgment goes out a wisitin’.”

“What do you mean by that, Sam?” said Mr. Pickwick. He raised himself in bed, and extended his hand, as if he were about to say something more; but suddenly checking himself, turned round, and bade his valet “Good night.”

“Good night, sir,” replied Mr. Weller. He paused when he got outside the door—shook his head—walked on—stopped—snuffed the candle—shook his head again—and finally proceeded slowly to his chamber, apparently buried in the profoundest meditation.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN WHICH MR. SAMUEL WELLER BEGINS TO DEVOTE HIS
ENERGIES TO THE RETURN MATCH BETWEEN HIMSELF
AND MR. TROTTER

IN a small room in the vicinity of the stable-yard, betimes in the morning, which was ushered in by Mr. Pickwick's adventure with the middle-aged lady in the yellow curl-papers, sat Mr. Weller senior, preparing himself for his journey to London. He was sitting in an excellent attitude for having his portrait taken.

■ It is very possible that at some earlier period of his career, Mr. Weller's profile might have presented a bold and determined outline. His face, however, had expanded under the influence of good living, and a disposition remarkable for resignation; and its bold fleshy curves had so far extended beyond the limits originally assigned them, that unless you took a full view of his countenance in front, it was difficult to distinguish more than the extreme tip of a very rubicund nose. His chin, from the same cause, had acquired the grave and imposing form which is generally described by prefixing the word "double" to that expressive feature; and his complexion exhibited that peculiarly mottled combination of colours which is only to be seen in gentlemen of his profession, and in underdone roast beef. Round his neck he wore a crimson travelling shawl, which merged into his chin by such imperceptible gradations, that it was difficult to distinguish the folds of the one, from the folds of the other. Over this, he mounted a long waistcoat of a broad pink-striped pattern, and over that again, a wide-skirted green coat, ornamented with large brass buttons, whereof the two which garnished the waist, were so far apart, that no man had ever beheld them both, at the same time. His hair, which was short, sleek, and black, was just visible beneath

the capacious brim of a low-crowned brown hat. His legs were encased in knee-cord breeches, and painted top-boots: and a copper watch-chain, terminating in one seal, and a key of the same material, dangled loosely from his capacious waistband.

We have said that Mr. Weller was engaged in preparing for his journey to London—he was taking sustenance, in fact. On the table before him, stood a pot of ale, a cold round of beef, and a very respectable-looking loaf, to each of which he distributed his favours in turn, with the most rigid impartiality. He had just cut a mighty slice from the latter, when the footsteps of somebody entering the room, caused him to raise his head; and he beheld his son.

“Mornin’, Sammy!” said the father.

The son walked up to the pot of ale, and nodding significantly to his parent, took a long draught by way of reply.

“Werry good power o’ suction, Sammy,” said Mr. Weller the elder, looking into the pot, when his first-born had set it down half empty. “You’d ha’ made an uncommon fine oyster, Sammy, if you’d been born in that station o’ life.”

“Yes, I des-say I should ha’ managed to pick up a respectable livin’,” replied Sam, applying himself to the cold beef, with considerable vigour.

“I’m wery sorry, Sammy,” said the elder Mr. Weller, shaking up the ale, by describing small circles with the pot, preparatory to drinking. “I’m wery sorry, Sammy, to hear from your lips, as you let yourself be gammoned by that ’ere mulberry man. I always thought, up to three days ago, that the names of Veller and gammon could never come into contract, Sammy, never.”

“Always exceptin’ the case of a widder, of course,” said Sam.

“Widders, Sammy,” replied Mr. Weller, slightly changing colour. “Widders are ’ceptions to ev’ry rule. I *have* heerd how many ord’nary women, one widder’s equal to, in pint o’ comin’ over you. I think it’s five-and-twenty, but I don’t rightly know vether it an’t more.”

“Well; that’s pretty well,” said Sam.

“Besides,” continued Mr. Weller, not noticing the interruption, “that’s a wery different thing. You know what the counsel said, Sammy, as defended the gen’l m’n as beat his wife with the poker, venever he got jolly. ‘And arter all, my Lord,’ says he, ‘it’s a amable weakness.’ So I says

respectin' widders, Sammy, and so you'll say, ven you gets as old as me."

"I ought to ha' know'd better, I know," said Sam.

"Ought to ha' know'd better!" repeated Mr. Weller, striking the table with his fist. "Ought to ha' know'd better! why, I know a young 'un as hasn't had half nor quarter your eddication—as hasn't slept about the markets, no, not six months—who'd ha' scorned to be let in, in such a vay; scorned it, Sammy." In the excitement of feeling produced by this agonising reflection, Mr. Weller rang the bell, and ordered an additional pint of ale.

"Well, it's no use talking about it now," said Sam. "It's over, and can't be helped, and that's one consolation, as they always says in Turkey, ven they cuts the wrong man's head off. It's my innings now, gov'nor, and as soon as I catches hold o' this ere Trotter, I'll have a good 'un."

"I hope you will, Sammy I hope you will," returned Mr. Weller. "Here's your health, Sammy, and may you speedily vipe off the disgrace as you've inflicted on the family name." In honour of this toast Mr. Weller imbibed at a draught, at least two-thirds of the newly-arrived pint, and handed it over to his son, to dispose of the remainder, which he instantaneously did.

"And now, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, consulting the large double-faced silver watch that hung at the end of the copper chain. "Now it's time I was up at the office to get my vay-bill, and see the coach loaded; for coaches, Sammy, is like guns—they requires to be loaded with wery great care, afore they go off."

At this parental and professional joke, Mr. Weller junior smiled a filial smile. His revered parent continued in a solemn tone:

"I'm a goin' to leave you, Samivel my boy, and there's no telling ven I shall see you again. Your mother-in-law may ha' been too much for me, or a thousand things may have happened by the time you next hears any news o' the celebrated Mr. Veller o' the Bell Savage. The family name depends wery much upon you, Samivel, and I hope you'll do wot's right by it. Upon all little pints o' breedin', I know I may trust you as vell as if it was my own self. So I've only this here one little bit of advice to give you. If ever you gets to up'ards o' fifty, and feels disposed to go a marryin' anybody—no matter who—jist you shut yourself up in your

own room, if you've got one, and pison yourself off hand. Hangin's vulgar, so don't you have nothin' to say to that. Pison yourself, Samivel, my boy, pison yourself, and you'll be glad on it arterwards." With these affecting words, Mr. Weller looked stedfastly on his son, and turning slowly upon his heel, disappeared from his sight.

In the contemplative mood which these words had awakened, Mr. Samuel Weller walked forth from the Great White Horse when his father had left him; and bending his steps towards St. Clement's Church, endeavoured to dissipate his melancholy, by strolling among its ancient precincts. He had loitered about, for some time, when he found himself in a retired spot—a kind of court-yard of venerable appearance—which he discovered had no other outlet than the turning by which he had entered. He was about retracing his steps, when he was suddenly transfixed to the spot by a sudden appearance: and the mode and manner of this appearance, we now proceed to relate.

Mr. Samuel Weller had been staring up, at the old brick houses now and then, in his deep abstraction, bestowing a wink upon some healthy-looking servant girl as she drew up a blind, or threw open a bed-room window, when the green gate of a garden at the bottom of the yard opened, and a man having emerged therefrom, closed the green gate very carefully after him, and walked briskly towards the very spot where Mr. Weller was standing.

Now, taking this, as an isolated fact, unaccompanied by any attendant circumstances, there was nothing very extraordinary in it; because in many parts of the world, men do come out of gardens, close green gates after them, and even walk briskly away, without attracting any particular share of public observation. It is clear, therefore, that there must have been something in the man, or in his manner, or both, to attract Mr. Weller's particular notice. Whether there was, or not, we must leave the reader to determine, when we have faithfully recorded the behaviour of the individual in question.

When the man had shut the green gate after him, he walked, as we have said twice already, with a brisk pace up the court-yard; but he no sooner caught sight of Mr. Weller, than he faltered, and stopped, as if uncertain, for the moment, what course to adopt. As the green gate was closed behind him, and there was no other outlet but the one in front, however, he was not long in perceiving that he must pass

Mr. Samuel Weller to get away. He therefore resumed his brisk pace, and advanced, staring straight before him. The most extraordinary thing about the man was, that he was contorting his face into the most fearful and astonishing grimaces that ever were beheld. Nature's handywork never was disguised with such extraordinary artificial carving, as the man had overlaid his countenance with in one moment.

"Well!" said Mr. Weller to himself, as the man approached. "This is verry odd. I could ha' swore it was him."

Up came the man, and his face became more frightfully distorted than ever, as he drew nearer.

"I could take my oath to that 'ere black hair, and mulberry suit," said Mr. Weller; "only I never see such a face as that, afore."

As Mr. Weller said this, the man's features assumed an unearthly twinge, perfectly hideous. He was obliged to pass very near Sam, however, and the scrutinising glance of that gentleman enabled him to detect, under all these appalling twists of feature, something too like the small eyes of Mr. Job Trotter, to be easily mistaken.

"Hallo, you sir!" shouted Sam, fiercely.

The stranger stopped.

"Hallo!" repeated Sam, still more gruffly.

The man with the horrible face, looked, with the greatest surprise, up the court, and down the court, and in at the windows of the houses—everywhere but at Sam Weller—and took another step forward, when he was brought to again, by another shout.

"Hallo, you sir!" said Sam, for the third time.

There was no pretending to mistake where the voice came from now, so the stranger, having no other resource, at last looked Sam Weller full in the face.

"It won't do, Job Trotter," said Sam. "Come! None o' that 'ere nonsense. You ain't so verry 'andsome that you can afford to throw away many o' your good looks. Bring them 'ere eyes o' your'n back into their proper places, or I'll knock 'em out of your head. D'ye hear?"

As Mr. Weller appeared fully disposed to act up to the spirit of this address, Mr. Trotter gradually allowed his face to resume its natural expression; and then giving a start of joy, exclaimed, "What do I see? Mr. Walker!"

"Ah," replied Sam. "You're verry glad to see me, ain't you?"

"Glad!" exclaimed Job Trotter; "oh, Mr. Walker, if you had but known how I have looked forward to this meeting! It is too much, Mr. Walker; I cannot bear it, indeed I cannot." And with these words, Mr. Trotter burst into a regular inundation of tears, and, flinging his arms around those of Mr. Weller, embraced him closely, in an ecstasy of joy.

"Get off!" cried Sam, indignant at this process, and vainly endeavouring to extricate himself from the grasp of his enthusiastic acquaintance. "Get off. I tell you. What are you crying over me for, you portable ingine?"

"Because I am so glad to see you," replied Job Trotter, gradually releasing Mr. Weller, as the first symptoms of his pugnacity disappeared. "Oh, Mr. Walker, this is too much"

"Too much!" echoed Sam, "I think it is too much—rayther! Now what have you got to say to me, eh?"

Mr. Trotter made no reply; for the little pink pocket handkerchief was in full force.

"What have you got to say to me, afore I knock your head off?" repeated Mr. Weller, in a threatening manner.

"Eh!" said Mr. Trotter, with a look of virtuous surprise.

"What have you got to say to me?"

"I, Mr. Walker!"

"Don't call me Valker; my name's Veller; you know that vell enough. What have you got to say to me?"

"Bless you, Mr. Walker—Weller I mean—a great many things, if you will come away somewhere, where we can talk comfortably. If you knew how I have looked for you, Mr. Weller—"

"Wery hard, indeed, I s'pose?" said Sam, drily.

"Very, very, sir," replied Mr. Trotter, without moving a muscle of his face. "But shake hands, Mr. Weller."

Sam eyed his companion for a few seconds, and then, as if actuated by a sudden impulse, complied with his request.

"How," said Job Trotter, as they walked away, "How is your dear, good master? Oh, he is a worthy gentleman, Mr. Weller! I hope he didn't catch cold, that dreadful night, sir."

There was a momentary look of deep slyness in Job Trotter's eye, as he said this, which ran a thrill through Mr. Weller's clenched fist as he burnt with a desire to make a demonstration on his ribs. Sam constrained himself, however, and replied that his master was extremely well.

"Oh, I am so glad," replied Mr. Trotter, "is he here?"

"Is your'n?" asked Sam, by way of reply.

"Oh, yes, he is here, and I grieve to say, Mr. Weller, he is going on, worse than ever."

"Ah, ah?" said Sam.

"Oh, shocking—terrible!"

"At a boarding-school?" said Sam.

"No, not at a boarding-school," replied Job Trotter, with the same sly look which Sam had noticed before; "Not at a boarding-school."

"At the house with the green gate?" said Sam, eyeing his companion closely.

"No, no—oh, not there," replied Job, with a quickness very unusual to him, "not there."

"What was *you* a doin' there?" asked Sam, with a sharp glance. "Got inside the gate by accident, perhaps?"

"Why, Mr. Weller," replied Job, "I don't mind telling you my little secrets, because, you know, we took such a fancy for each other when we first met. You recollect how pleasant we were that morning?"

"Oh yes," said Sam, impatiently. "I remember. Well."

"Well," replied Job, speaking with great precision, and in the low tone of a man who communicates an important secret; "in that house with the green gate, Mr. Weller, they keep a good many servants."

"So I should think, from the look on it," interposed Sam.

"Yes," continued Mr. Trotter, "and one of them is a cook, who has saved up a little money, Mr. Weller, and is desirous, if she can establish herself in life, to open a little shop in the chandlery way, you see."

"Yes."

"Yes, Mr. Weller. Well, sir, I met her at a chapel that I go to; a very neat little chapel in this town, Mr. Weller, where they sing the number four collection of hymns, which I generally carry about with me, in a little book, which you may perhaps have seen in my hand— and I got a little intimate with her, Mr. Weller, and from that, an acquaintance sprung up between us, and I may venture to say, Mr. Weller, that I am to be the chandler."

"Ah, and a very amiable chandler you'll make," replied Sam, eyeing Job with a side look of intense dislike.

"The great advantage of this, Mr. Weller," continued Job, his eyes filling with tears as he spoke, "will be, that I shall

be able to leave my present disgraceful service with that bad man, and to devote myself to a better and more virtuous life; more like the way in which I was brought up, Mr. Weller."

"You must ha' been very nicely brought up," said Sam.

"Oh, very, Mr. Weller, very," replied Job. At the recollection of the purity of his youthful days, Mr. Trotter pulled forth the pink handkerchief, and wept copiously.

"You must ha' been an uncommon nice boy, to go to school vith," said Sam.

"I was, sir," replied Job, heaving a deep sigh. "I was the idol of the place."

"Ah," said Sam, "I don't wonder at it. What a comfort you must ha' been to your blessed mother."

At these words, Mr. Job Trotter inserted an end of the pink handkerchief into the corner of each eye, one after the other, and began to weep copiously.

"Wot's the matter vith the man," said Sam, indignantly. "Chelsea water-works is nothin' to you. What are you melting vith now? The consciousness o' willainy?"

"I cannot keep my feelings down, Mr. Weller," said Job, after a short pause. "To think that my master should have suspected the conversation I had with yours, and so dragged me away in a post-chaise, and after persuading the sweet young lady to say she knew nothing of him, and bribing the school-mistress to do the same, deserted her for a better speculation! Oh! Mr. Weller, it makes me shudder."

"Oh, that was the vay, was it?" said Mr. Weller.

"To be sure it was," replied Job.

"Vell," said Sam, as they had now arrived near the Hotel, "I vant to have a little bit o' talk with you, Job; so if you're not partickler engaged, I should like to see you at the Great White Horse to-night, somewheres about eight o'clock."

"I shall be sure to come," said Job.

"Yes, you'd better," replied Sam, with a very meaning look, "or else I shall perhaps be asking arter you, at the other side of the green gate, and then I might cut you out, you know."

"I shall be sure to be with you, sir," said Mr. Trotter; and wringing Sam's hand with the utmost fervour, he walked away.

"Take care, Job Trotter, take care," said Sam, looking after him, "or I shall be one too many for you this time. I shall, indeed." Having uttered this soliloquy, and looked after Job till he was to be seen no more, Mr. Weller made the best of his way to his master's bed-room.

"It's all in training, sir," said Sam.

"What's in training, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"I have found 'em out, sir," said Sam.

"Found out who?"

"That 'ere queer custome; and the melan-cholly chap with the black hair."

"Impossible, Sam!" said Mr. Pickwick, with the greatest energy. "Where are they, Sam; where are they?"

"Hush, hush!" replied Mr. Weller; and as he assisted Mr. Pickwick to dress, he detailed the plan of action on which he proposed to enter.

"But when is this to be done, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"All in good time, sir," replied Sam.

Whether it was done in good time, or not, will be seen hereafter.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEREIN MR. PETER MAGNUS GROWS JEALOUS, AND THE
MIDDLE-AGED LADY APPREHENSIVE, WHICH BRINGS
THE PICKWICKIANS WITHIN THE GRASP OF THE LAW

WHEN Mr. Pickwick descended to the room in which he and Mr. Peter Magnus had spent the preceding evening, he found that gentleman with the major part of the contents of the two bags, the leathern hat-box, and the brown-paper parcel, displayed to all possible advantage on his person, while he himself was pacing up and down the room in a state of the utmost excitement and agitation.

"Good morning, sir," said Mr. Peter Magnus. "What do you think of this, sir?"

"Very effective indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick, surveying the garments of Mr. Peter Magnus with a good-natured smile.

"Yes, I think it'll do," said Mr. Magnus. "Mr. Pickwick, sir, I have sent up my card."

"Have you?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"And the waiter brought back word, that she would see me at eleven—at eleven, sir; it only wants a quarter now."

"Very near the time," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, it is rather near," replied Mr. Magnus, "rather too near to be pleasant—eh! Mr. Pickwick, sir?"

"Confidence is a great thing in these cases," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"I believe it is, sir," said Mr. Peter Magnus. "I am very confident, sir. Really, Mr. Pickwick, I do not see why a man should feel any fear in such a case as this, sir. What is it, sir? There's nothing to be ashamed of; it's a matter of mutual accommodation, nothing more. Husband on one side, wife on the other. That's my view of the matter, Mr. Pickwick."

"It is a very philosophical one," replied Mr. Pickwick. "But breakfast is waiting, Mr. Magnus. Come."

Down they sat to breakfast, but it was evident, notwithstanding the boasting of Mr. Peter Magnus, that he laboured under a very considerable degree of nervousness, of which loss of appetite, a propensity to upset the tea-things, a spectral attempt at drollery, and an irresistible inclination to look at the clock, every other second, were among the principal symptoms.

"He—he—he," tittered Mr. Magnus, affecting cheerfulness, and gasping with agitation. "It only wants two minutes, Mr. Pickwick. Am I pale, sir?"

"Not very," replied Mr. Pickwick.

There was a brief pause.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pickwick; but have you ever done this sort of thing in your time?" said Mr. Magnus.

"You mean proposing?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes."

"Never," said Mr. Pickwick, with great energy, "never."

"You have no idea, then, how it's best to begin?" said Mr. Magnus.

"Why," said Mr. Pickwick, "I may have formed some ideas upon the subject, but, as I have never submitted them to the test of experience, I should be sorry if you were induced to regulate your proceedings by them."

"I should feel very much obliged to you, for any advice, sir," said Mr. Magnus, taking another look at the clock: the hand of which was verging on the five minutes past.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, with the profound solemnity with which that great man could, when he pleased, render his remarks so deeply impressive: "I should commence, sir, with a tribute to the lady's beauty and excellent qualities; from them, sir, I should diverge to my own unworthiness."

"Very good," said Mr. Magnus.

"Unworthiness for *her* only, mind, sir," resumed Mr. Pickwick; "for to shew that I was not wholly unworthy, sir, I should take a brief review of my past life, and present condition. I should argue, by analogy, that to anybody else, I must be a very desirable object. I should then expatiate on the warmth of my love, and the depth of my devotion. Perhaps I might then be tempted to seize her hand."

"Yes, I see," said Mr. Magnus; "that would be a very great point."

"I should then, sir," continued Mr. Pickwick, growing warmer as the subject presented itself in more glowing colours before him: "I should then, sir, come to the plain and simple question, 'Will you have me?' I think I am justified in assuming that upon this, she would turn away her head."

"You think that may be taken for granted?" said Mr. Magnus; "because if she did not do that at the right place, it would be embarrassing."

"I think she would," said Mr. Pickwick. "Upon this, sir, I should squeeze her hand, and I think—I *think*, Mr. Magnus—that after I had done that, supposing there was no refusal, I should gently draw away the handkerchief, which my slight knowledge of human nature leads me to suppose the lady would be applying to her eyes at the moment, and steal a respectful kiss. I think I should kiss her, Mr. Magnus; and at this particular point, I am decidedly of opinion that if the lady were going to take me at all, she would murmur into my ears a bashful acceptance."

Mr. Magnus started; gazed on Mr. Pickwick's intelligent face, for a short time in silence; and then (the dial pointing to the ten minutes past) shook him warmly by the hand, and rushed desperately from the room.

Mr. Pickwick had taken a few strides to and fro; and the small hand of the clock following the latter part of his example, had arrived at the figure which indicates the half hour, when the door suddenly opened. He turned round to meet Mr. Peter Magnus, and encountered, in his stead, the joyous face of Mr. Tupman, the serene countenance of Mr. Winkle, and the intellectual lineaments of Mr. Snodgrass. As Mr. Pickwick greeted them, Mr. Peter Magnus tripped into the room.

"My friends, the gentleman I was speaking of—Mr. Magnus," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Your seryant, gentlemen," said Mr. Magnus, evidently in a high state of excitement; "Mr. Pickwick, allow me to speak to you, one moment, sir."

As he said this, Mr. Magnus harnessed his forefinger to Mr. Pickwick's button-hole, and, drawing him to a window recess, said:

"Congratulate me, Mr. Pickwick; I followed your advice to the very letter."

"And it was all correct, was it?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"It was, sir. Could not possibly have been better," replied Mr. Magnus. "Mr. Pickwick, she is mine."

"I congratulate you with all my heart," replied Mr. Pickwick, warmly shaking his new friend by the hand.

"You must see her, sir," said Mr. Magnus; "this way, if you please. Excuse us for one instant, gentlemen." Hurrying on in this way, Mr. Peter Magnus drew Mr. Pickwick from the room. He paused at the next door in the passage, and tapped gently thereat.

"Come in," said a female voice. And in they went.

"Miss Witherfield," said Mr. Magnus, "Allow me to introduce my very particular friend Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Pickwick, I beg to make you known to Miss Witherfield."

The lady was at the upper end of the room. As Mr. Pickwick bowed, he took his spectacles from his waistcoat pocket, and put them on; a process which he had no sooner gone through, than, uttering an exclamation of surprise, Mr. Pickwick retreated several paces, and the lady, with a half-suppressed scream, hid her face in her hands, and dropped into a chair; whereupon Mr. Peter Magnus was stricken motionless on the spot, and gazed from one to the other, with a countenance expressive of the extremities of horror and surprise.

This certainly was, to all appearance, very unaccountable behaviour; but the fact is, that Mr. Pickwick no sooner put on his spectacles, than he at once recognised in the future Mrs. Magnus the lady into whose room he had so unwarrantably intruded on the previous night; and the spectacles had no sooner crossed Mr. Pickwick's nose, than the lady at once identified the countenance which she had seen surrounded by all the horrors of a night-cap. So the lady screamed, and Mr. Pickwick started.

"Mr. Pickwick!" exclaimed Mr. Magnus, lost in astonishment, "What is the meaning of this, sir? What is the meaning of it, sir?" added Mr. Magnus, in a threatening, and a louder tone.

"Sir," said Mr. Pickwick, somewhat indignant at the very sudden manner in which Mr. Peter Magnus had conjugated himself into the imperative mood, "I decline answering that question."

"You decline it, sir?" said Mr. Magnus.

"I do, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick: "I object to saying anything which may compromise that lady, or awaken unpleasant recollections in her breast, without her consent and permission."

"Miss Witherfield," said Mr. Peter Magnus, "do you know this person?"

"Know him!" repeated the middle-aged lady, hesitating.

"Yes, know him, ma'am. I said know him," replied Mr. Magnus, with ferocity.

"I have seen him," replied the middle-aged lady.

"Where?" inquired Mr. Magnus, "where?"

"That," said the middle-aged lady, rising from her seat, and averting her head, "that I would not reveal for worlds."

"I understand you, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, "and respect your delicacy; it shall never be revealed by me, depend upon it."

"Upon my word, ma'am," said Mr. Magnus, "considering the situation in which I am placed with regard to yourself, you carry this matter off with tolerable coolness—tolerable coolness, ma'am."

"Cruel Mr. Magnus!" said the middle-aged lady; here she wept very copiously indeed.

"Address your observations to me, sir," interposed Mr. Pickwick; "I alone am to blame, if anybody be."

"Oh! you alone are to blame, are you, sir?" said Mr. Magnus; "I—I—see through this, sir. You repent of your determination now, do you?"

"My determination!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Your determination, sir. Oh! don't stare at me, sir," said Mr. Magnus; "I recollect your words last night, sir. You came down here, sir, to expose the treachery and falsehood of an individual on whose truth and honour you had placed implicit reliance—eh?" Here Mr. Peter Magnus indulged in a prolonged sneer; and taking off his green spectacles—which he probably found superfluous in his fit of jealousy—rolled his little eyes about, in a manner frightful to behold.

"Eh?" said Mr. Magnus; and then he repeated the sneer with increased effect. "But you shall answer it, sir."

"Answer what?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Never mind, sir," replied Mr. Magnus, striding up and down the room. "Never mind."

There must be something very comprehensive in this phrase of "Never mind," for we do not recollect to have ever witnessed a quarrel in the street, at a theatre, public room, or elsewhere, in which it has not been the standard reply to all belligerent inquiries. "Do you call yourself a gentleman, sir?"—"Never mind, sir." "Did I offer to say anything to the young woman, sir?"—"Never mind, sir?" "Do you want your head knocked up against that wall, sir?"—"Never mind, sir." It is observable, too, that there would appear to be some hidden taint in this universal "Never mind," which rouses more indignation in the bosom of the individual addressed, than the most lavish abuse could possibly awaken.

We do not mean to assert that the application of this brevity to himself, struck exactly that indignation to Mr. Pickwick's soul, which it would infallibly have roused in a vulgar breast. We merely record the fact that Mr. Pickwick opened the room door, and abruptly called out, "Tupman, come here!"

Mr. Tupman immediately presented himself, with a look of very considerable surprise.

"Tupman," said Mr. Pickwick, "a secret of some delicacy, in which that lady is concerned, is the cause of a difference which has just arisen between this gentleman and myself. When I assure him, in your presence, that it has no relation to himself, and is not in any way connected with his affairs, I need hardly beg you to take notice that if he continue to dispute it, he expresses a doubt of my veracity, which I shall consider extremely insulting." As Mr. Pickwick said this, he looked encyclopædias at Mr. Peter Magnus.

Mr. Pickwick's upright and honourable bearing, coupled with that force and energy of speech which so eminently distinguished him, would have carried conviction to any reasonable mind; but unfortunately at that particular moment, the mind of Mr. Peter Magnus was in anything but reasonable order. Consequently, instead of receiving Mr. Pickwick's explanation as he ought to have done, he forthwith proceeded to work himself into a red-hot, scorching, consuming, passion, and to talk about what was due to his own feelings, and all that sort of thing: adding force to his declamation by striding to and fro, and pulling his hair—amusements which he would vary occasionally, by shaking his fist in Mr. Pickwick's philanthropic countenance.

Mr. Pickwick, in his turn, conscious of his own innocence and rectitude, and irritated by having unfortunately involved the middle-aged lady in such an unpleasant affair, was not so quietly disposed as was his wont. The consequence was, that words ran high, and voices higher; and at length Mr. Magnus told Mr. Pickwick he should hear from him; to which Mr. Pickwick replied, with laudable politeness, that the sooner he heard from him the better; whereupon the middle-aged lady rushed in terror from the room, out of which Mr. Tupman dragged Mr. Pickwick, leaving Mr. Peter Magnus to himself and meditation.

If the middle-aged lady had mingled much with the busy world, or had profited at all by the manners and customs of those who make the laws and set the fashions, she would have known that this sort of ferocity is the most harmless thing in nature; but as she had lived for the most part in the country, and never read the parliamentary debates, she was little versed in these particular refinements of civilised life. Accordingly, when she had gained her bed-chamber, bolted herself in, and begun to meditate on the scene she had just witnessed, the most terrific pictures of slaughter and destruction presented themselves to her imagination; among which, a full-length portrait of Mr. Peter Magnus borne home by four men, with the embellishment of a whole barrel-full of bullets in his left side, was among the very least. The more the middle-aged lady meditated, the more terrified she became; and at length she determined to repair to the house of the principal magistrate of the town, and request him to secure the persons of Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman without delay.

To this decision the middle-aged lady was impelled by a variety of considerations, the chief of which, was the incontestable proof it would afford of her devotion to Mr. Peter Magnus, and her anxiety for his safety. She was too well acquainted with his jealous temperament to venture the slightest allusion to the real cause of her agitation on beholding Mr. Pickwick; and she trusted to her own influence and power of persuasion with the little man, to quell his boisterous jealousy, supposing that Mr. Pickwick were removed; and no fresh quarrel could arise. Filled with these reflections, the middle-aged lady arrayed herself in her bonnet and shawl, and repaired to the Mayor's dwelling straightway.

Now George Nupkins, Esquire, the principal magistrate aforesaid, was as grand a personage as the fastest walker would find out, between sunrise and sunset, on the twenty-first of June, which being, according to the almanacs, the longest day in the whole year, would naturally afford him the longest period for his search. On this particular morning, Mr. Nupkins was in a state of the utmost excitement and irritation, for there had been a rebellion in the town; all the day-scholars at the largest day-school had conspired to break the windows of an obnoxious apple-seller, and had hooted the beadle, and pelted the constabulary—an elderly gentleman in top-boots, who had been called out to repress the tumult, and who had been a peace-officer, man and boy, for half a century at least. And Mr. Nupkins was sitting in his easy chair, frowning with majesty, and boiling with rage, when a lady was announced on pressing, private, and particular business. Mr. Nupkins looked calmly terrible, and commanded that the lady should be shown in: which command, like all the mandates of emperors, and magistrates and other great potentates of the earth, was forthwith obeyed; and Miss Witherfield, interestingly agitated, was ushered in accordingly.

“Muzzle!” said the magistrate.

Muzzle was an undersized footman, with a long body and short legs.

“Muzzle!”

“Yes, your worship.”

“Place a chair, and leave the room.”

“Yes, your worship.”

“Now, ma’am, will you state your business?” said the magistrate.

“It is of a very painful kind, sir,” said Miss Witherfield.

“Very likely, ma’am,” said the magistrate. “Compose your feelings, ma’am.” Here Mr. Nupkins looked benignant. “And then tell me what legal business brings you here, ma’am.” Here the magistrate triumphed over the man; and he looked stern again.

“It is very distressing to me, sir, to give this information,” said Miss Witherfield, “but I fear a duel is going to be fought here.”

“Here, ma’am?” said the magistrate. “Where, ma’am?”

“In Ipswich.”

“In Ipswich, ma’am! A duel in Ipswich!” said the

magistrate, perfectly aghast at the notion. "Impossible, ma'am; nothing of the kind can be contemplated in this town, I am persuaded. Bless my soul, ma'am, are you aware of the activity of our local magistracy? Do you happen to have heard, ma'am, that I rushed into a prize-ring on the fourth of May last, attended by only sixty special constables; and, at the hazard of falling a sacrifice to the angry passions of an infuriated multitude, prohibited a pugilistic contest between the Middlesex Dumpling and the Suffolk Bantam? A duel in Ipswich, ma'am! I don't think—I do *not* think," said the magistrate, reasoning with himself, "that any two men can have had the hardihood to plan such a breach of the peace, in this town."

"My information is unfortunately but too correct," said the middle-aged lady, "I was present at the quarrel."

"It's a most extraordinary thing," said the astounded magistrate. "Muzzle!"

"Yes, your worship."

"Send Mr. Jinks here, directly! Instantly."

"Yes, your worship."

Muzzle retired; and a pale, sharp-nosed, half-fed, shabbily-clad clerk, of middle age, entered the room.

"Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate. "Mr. Jinks."

"Sir," said Mr. Jinks.

"This lady, Mr. Jinks, has come here, to give information of an intended duel in this town."

Mr. Jinks not knowing exactly what to do, smiled a dependent's smile.

"What are you laughing at, Mr. Jinks?" said the magistrate.

Mr. Jinks looked serious, instantly.

"Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate, "you're a fool."

Mr. Jinks looked humbly at the great man, and bit the top of his pen.

"You may see something very comical in this information, sir; but I can tell you this, Mr. Jinks; that you have very little to laugh at," said the magistrate.

The hungry-looking Jinks sighed, as if he were quite aware of the fact of his having very little indeed, to be merry about; and, being ordered to take the lady's information, shambled to a seat, and proceeded to write it down.

"This man, Pickwick, is the principal, I understand," said the magistrate, when the statement was finished.

"He is," said the middle-aged lady.

"And the other rioter—what's his name, Mr. Jinks?"

"Tupman, sir."

"Tupman is the second?"

"Yes."

"The other principal you say, has absconded, ma'am?"

"Yes," replied Miss Witherfield, with a short cough.

"Very well," said the magistrate. "These are two cut-throats from London, who have come down here to destroy his Majesty's population: thinking that at this distance from the capital, the arm of the law is weak and paralysed. They shall be made an example of. Draw up the warrants, Mr. Jinks. Muzzle!"

"Yes, your worship."

"Is Grummer down stairs?"

"Yes, your worship."

"Send him up."

The obsequious Muzzle retired, and presently returned, introducing the elderly gentleman in the top-boots, who was chiefly remarkable for a bottle-nose, a hoarse voice, a snuff-coloured surtout, and a wandering eye.

"Grummer," said the magistrate.

"Your wash-up."

"Is the town quiet now?"

"Pretty well, your wash-up," replied Grummer. "Pop'lar feeling has in a measure subsided, consekens o' the boys having dispersed to cricket."

"Nothing but vigorous measures will do in these times, Grummer," said the magistrate, in a determined manner. "If the authority of the king's officers is set at nought, we must have the riot act read. If the civil power cannot protect these windows, Grummer, the military must protect the civil power, and the windows too. I believe that is a maxim of the constitution, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir," said Jinks.

"Very good," said the magistrate, signing the warrants. "Grummer, you will bring these persons before me, this afternoon. You will find them at the Great White Horse. You recollect the case of the Middlesex Dumpling and the Suffolk Bantam, Grummer?"

Mr. Grummer intimated, by a retrospective shake of the head, that he should never forget it—as indeed it was not likely he would, so long as it continued to be cited daily.

"This is even more unconstitutional," said the magistrate; "this is even a greater breach of the peace, and a grosser infringement of his Majesty's prerogative. I believe duelling is one of his Majesty's most undoubted prerogatives, Mr. Jinks?"

"Expressly stipulated in Magna Charta, sir," said Mr. Jinks.

"One of the brightest jewels in the British crown, wrung from his Majesty by the Barons, I believe, Mr. Jinks?" said the magistrate.

"Just so, sir," replied Mr. Jinks.

"Very well," said the magistrate, drawing himself up proudly, "it shall not be violated in this portion of his dominions. Grummer, procure assistance, and execute these warrants with as little delay as possible. Muzzle!"

"Yes, your worship."

"Show the lady out."

Miss Witherfield retired, deeply impressed with the magistrate's learning and research; Mr. Nupkins retired to lunch; Mr. Jinks retired within himself—that being the only retirement he had, except the sofa-bedstead in the small parlour which was occupied by his landlady's family in the daytime—and Mr. Grummer retired, to wipe out, by his mode of discharging his present commission, the insult which had been fastened upon himself, and the other representative of his Majesty—the beadle—in the course of the morning.

While these resolute and determined preparations for the conservation of the King's peace, were pending, Mr. Pickwick and his friends, wholly unconscious of the mighty events in progress, had sat quietly down to dinner; and very talkative and companionable they all were. Mr. Pickwick was in the very act of relating his adventure of the preceding night, to the great amusement of his followers, Mr. Tupman especially, when the door opened, and a somewhat forbidding countenance peeped into the room. The eyes in the forbidding countenance looked very earnestly at Mr. Pickwick, for several seconds, and were to all appearance satisfied with their investigation; for the body to which the forbidding countenance belonged, slowly brought itself into the apartment, and presented the form of an elderly individual in top-boots—not to keep the reader any longer in suspense, in short, the eyes were the wandering eyes of Mr. Grummer, and the body was the body of the same gentleman.

Mr. Grummer's mode of proceeding was professional, but peculiar. His first act was to bolt the door on the inside; his second, to polish his head and countenance very carefully with a cotton handkerchief; his third, to place his hat, with the cotton handkerchief in it, on the nearest chair; and his fourth, to produce from the breast-pocket of his coat a short truncheon, surmounted by a brazen crown, with which he beckoned to Mr. Pickwick with a grave and ghost-like air.

Mr. Snodgrass was the first to break the astonished silence. He looked steadily at Mr. Grummer for a brief space, and then said emphatically: "This is a private room, sir. A private room."

Mr. Grummer shook his head, and replied, "No room's private to his Majesty when the street door's once passed. That's law. Some people maintains that an Englishman's house is his castle. That's gummon."

The Pickwickians gazed on each other with wondering eyes.

"Which is Mr. Tupman?" inquired Mr. Grummer. He had an intuitive perception of Mr. Pickwick; he knew *him* at once.

"My name's Tupman," said that gentleman.

"My name's Law," said Mr. Grummer.

"What?" said Mr. Tupman.

"Law," replied Mr. Grummer, "law, civil power, and exekative; them's my titles; here's my authority. Blank Tupman, blank Pickvick—against the peace of our sufferin Lord the King—stattit in that case made and purwided—and all regular. I apprehend you Pickvick! Tupman—the aforesaid."

"What do you mean by this insolence?" said Mr. Tupman, starting up: "Leave the room!"

"Halloo," said Mr. Grummer, retreating very expeditiously to the door, and opening it an inch or two, "Dubbley."

"Well," said a deep voice from the passage.

"Come for'ard, Dubbley."

At the word of command, a dirty-faced man, something over six feet high, and stout in proportion, squeezed himself through the half-open door (making his face very red in the process), and entered the room.

"Is the other specials outside, Dubbley?" inquired Mr. Grummer.

Mr. Dubbley, who was a man of few words, nodded assent.

"Order in the diuision under your charge, Dubbley," said Mr. Grummer.

Mr. Dubbley did as he was desired ; and half a dozen men, each with a short truncheon and a brass crown, flocked into the room. Mr. Grummer pocketed his staff, and looked at Mr. Dubbley ; Mr. Dubbley pocketed *his* staff and looked at the diuision ; the diuision pocketed *their* staves and looked at Messrs. Tupman and Pickwick.

Mr. Pickwick and his followers rose as one man.

"What is the meaning of this atrocious intrusion upon my privacy ?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Who dares apprehend me ?" said Mr. Tupman.

"What do you want here, scoundrels ?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

Mr. Winkle said nothing, but he fixed his eyes on Grummer, and bestowed a look upon him, which, if he had had any feeling, must have pierced his brain. As it was, however, it had no visible effect upon him whatever.

When the executive perceived that Mr. Pickwick and his friends were disposed to resist the authority of the law, they very significantly turned up their coat sleeves, as if knocking them down in the first instance, and taking them up afterwards, were a mere professional act which had only to be thought of, to be done, as a matter of course. This demonstration was not lost upon Mr. Pickwick. He conferred a few moments with Mr. Tupman apart, and then signified his readiness to proceed to the Mayor's residence, merely begging the parties then and there assembled, to take notice, that it was his firm intention to resent this monstrous invasion of his privileges as an Englishman, the instant he was at liberty ; whereat the parties then and there assembled laughed very heartily, with the single exception of Mr. Grummer, who seemed to consider that any slight cast upon the divine right of magistrates, was a species of blasphemy, not to be tolerated.

But when Mr. Pickwick had signified his readiness to bow to the laws of his country ; and just when the waiters, and hostlers, and chamber-maids, and post-boys, who had anticipated a delightful commotion from his threatened obstinacy, began to turn away, disappointed and disgusted, a difficulty arose which had not been foreseen. With every sentiment of veneration for the constituted authorities, Mr. Pickwick resolutely protested against making his appearance in the

public streets, surrounded and guarded by the officers of justice, like a common criminal. Mr. Grummer, in the then disturbed state of public feeling (for it was half-holiday, and the boys had not yet gone home), as resolutely protested against walking on the opposite side of the way, and taking Mr. Pickwick's parole that he would go straight to the magistrate's; and both Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman as strenuously objected to the expense of a post-coach, which was the only respectable conveyance that could be obtained. The dispute ran high, and the dilemma lasted long; and just as the executive were on the point of overcoming Mr. Pickwick's objection to walking to the magistrate's, by the trite expedient of carrying him thither, it was recollected that there stood in the inn yard, an old sedan chair, which having been originally built for a gouty gentleman with funded property, would hold Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman, at least as conveniently as a modern post-chaise. The chair was hired, and brought into the hall; Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman squeezed themselves inside, and pulled down the blinds; a couple of chairmen were speedily found; and the procession started in grand order. The specials surrounded the body of the vehicle; Mr. Grummer and Mr. Dubbley marched triumphantly in front; Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle walked arm-in-arm behind; and the unsoaped of Ipswich brought up the rear.

The shopkeepers of the town, although they had a very indistinct notion of the nature of the offence, could not but be much edified and gratified by this spectacle. Here was the strong arm of the law, coming down with twenty gold-beater force, upon two offenders from the metropolis itself; the mighty engine was directed by their own magistrate, and worked by their own officers; and both the criminals by their united efforts, were securely shut up, in the narrow compass of one sedan-chair. Many were the expressions of approval and admiration which greeted Mr. Grummer, as he headed the cavalcade, staff in hand; loud and long were the shouts raised by the unsoaped; and amidst these united testimonials of public approbation, the procession moved slowly and majestically along.

Mr. Weller, habited in his morning jacket with the black calico sleeves, was returning in a rather desponding state from an unsuccessful survey of the mysterious house with the green gate, when, raising his eyes, he beheld a crowd

pouring down the street, surrounding an object which had very much the appearance of a sedan-chair. Willing to divert his thoughts from the failure of his enterprise, he stepped aside to see the crowd pass; and finding that they were cheering away, very much to their own satisfaction, forthwith began (by way of raising his spirits) to cheer too, with all his might and main.

Mr. Grummer passed, and Mr. Dubbley passed, and the sedan passed, and the body-guard of specials passed, and Sam was still responding to the enthusiastic cheers of the mob, and waving his hat about as if he were in the very last extreme of the wildest joy (though, of course, he had not the faintest idea of the matter in hand), when he was suddenly stopped by the unexpected appearance of Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass.

"What's the row, gen'l'm'n?" cried Sam. "Who have they got in this here watch-box in mournin'?"

Both gentlemen replied together, but their words were lost in the tumult.

"Who?" cried Sam again.

Once more was a joint reply returned; and, though the words were inaudible, Sam saw by the motion of the two pairs of lips that they had uttered the magic word "Pickwick."

This was enough. In another minute Mr. Weller had made his way through the crowd, stopped the chairmen, and confronted the portly Grummer.

"Hallo, old gen'l'm'n!" said Sam. "Who have you got in this here conveyance?"

"Stand back," said Mr. Grummer, whose dignity, like the dignity of a great many other men, had been wondrously augmented by a little popularity.

"Knock him down, if he don't," said Mr. Dubbley.

"I'm verry much obliged to you, old gen'l'm'n," replied Sam, "for consulting my convenience, and I'm still more obliged to the other gen'l'm'n, who looks as if he'd just escaped from a giant's carrywan, for his verry 'ansome suggestion; but I should perfer your givin' me a answer to my question, if it's all the same to you.—How are you, sir?" This last observation was addressed with a patronising air to Mr. Pickwick, who was peeping through the front window.

Mr. Grummer, perfectly speechless with indignation, dragged



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the truncheon with the brass crown from its particular pocket, and flourished it before Sam's eyes.

"Ah," said Sam, "it's verry pretty, 'specially the crown, which is uncommon like the real one."

"Stand back!" said the outraged Mr. Grummer. By way of adding force to the command, he thrust the brass emblem of royalty into Sam's neckcloth with one hand, and seized Sam's collar with the other: a compliment which Mr. Weller returned by knocking him down out of hand: having previously, with the utmost consideration, knocked down a chairman for him to lie upon.

Whether Mr. Winkle was seized with a temporary attack of that species of insanity which originates in a sense of injury, or animated by this display of Mr. Weller's valour, is uncertain; but certain it is, that he no sooner saw Mr. Grummer fall than he made a terrific onslaught on a small boy who stood next him; whereupon Mr. Snodgrass, in a truly christian spirit, and in order that he might take no one unawares, announced in a very loud tone that he was going to begin, and proceeded to take off his coat with the utmost deliberation. He was immediately surrounded and secured; and it is but common justice both to him and Mr. Winkle to say, that they did not make the slightest attempt to rescue either themselves or Mr. Weller: who, after a most vigorous resistance, was overpowered by numbers and taken prisoner. The procession then re-formed; the chairmen resumed their stations; and the march was re-commenced.

Mr. Pickwick's indignation during the whole of this proceeding was beyond all bounds. He could just see Sam upsetting the specials, and flying about in every direction: and that was all he could see, for the sedan doors wouldn't open, and the blinds wouldn't pull up. At length, with the assistance of Mr. Tupman, he managed to push open the roof; and mounting on the seat, and steadying himself as well as he could, by placing his hand on that gentleman's shoulder, Mr. Pickwick proceeded to address the multitude; to dwell upon the unjustifiable manner in which he had been treated; and to call upon them to take notice that his servant had been first assaulted. In this order they reached the magistrate's house; the chairmen trotting, the prisoners following, Mr. Pickwick oratorising, and the crowd shouting.

CHAPTER XXV

SHOWING, AMONG A VARIETY OF PLEASANT MATTERS, HOW MAJESTIC AND IMPARTIAL MR. NUPKINS WAS ; AND HOW MR. WELLER RETURNED MR. JOB TROTTER'S SHUTTLECOCK AS HEAVILY AS IT CAME. WITH ANOTHER MATTER, WHICH WILL BE FOUND IN ITS PLACE

VIOLENT was Mr. Weller's indignation as he was borne along; numerous were the allusions to the personal appearance and demeanour of Mr. Grummer and his companion: and valorous were the defiances to any six of the gentlemen present: in which he vented his dissatisfaction. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle listened with gloomy respect to the torrent of eloquence which their leader poured forth from the sedan-chair, and the rapid course of which not all Mr. Tupman's earnest entreaties to have the lid of the vehicle closed, were able to check for an instant. But Mr. Weller's anger quickly gave way to curiosity when the procession turned down the identical court-yard in which he had met with the runaway Job Trotter: and curiosity was exchanged for a feeling of the most gleeful astonishment, when the all-important Mr. Grummer, commanding the sedan-bearers to halt, advanced with dignified and portentous steps to the very green gate from which Job Trotter had emerged, and gave a mighty pull at the bell-handle which hung at the side thereof. The ring was answered by a very smart and pretty-faced servant-girl, who, after holding up her hands in astonishment at the rebellious appearance of the prisoners, and the impassioned language of Mr. Pickwick, summoned Mr. Muzzle. Mr. Muzzle opened one half of the carriage gate, to admit the sedan, the captured ones, and the specials; and immediately slammed it in the faces of the mob, who, indignant at being excluded, and anxious to see what fol-

lowed, relieved their feelings by kicking at the gate and ringing the bell, for an hour or two afterwards. In this amusement they all took part by turns, except three or four fortunate individuals, who, having discovered a grating in the gate which commanded a view of nothing, stared through it with the indefatigable perseverance with which people will flatten their noses against the front windows of a chemist's shop, when a drunken man, who has been run over by a dog-cart in the street, is undergoing a surgical inspection in the back-parlour.

At the foot of a flight of steps, leading to the house door, which was guarded on either side by an American aloe in a green tub, the sedan-chair stopped. Mr. Pickwick and his friends were conducted into the hall, whence, having been previously announced by Muzzle, and ordered in by Mr. Nupkins, they were ushered into the worshipful presence of that public-spirited officer.

The scene was an impressive one, well calculated to strike terror to the hearts of culprits, and to impress them with an adequate idea of the stern majesty of the law. In front of a big book-case, in a big chair, behind a big table, and before a big volume, sat Mr. Nupkins, looking a full size larger than any one of them, big as they were. The table was adorned with piles of papers: and above the further end of it, appeared the head and shoulders of Mr. Jinks, who was busily engaged in looking as busy as possible. The party having all entered, Muzzle carefully closed the door, and placed himself behind his master's chair to await his orders. Mr. Nupkins threw himself back, with thrilling solemnity, and scrutinised the faces of his unwilling visitors.

"Now, Grummer, who is that person?" said Mr. Nupkins, pointing to Mr. Pickwick, who, as the spokesman of his friends, stood hat in hand, bowing with the utmost politeness and respect.

"This here's Pickvick, your wash-up," said Grummer.

"Come, none o' that 'ere, old Strike-a-light," interposed Mr. Weller, elbowing himself into the front rank. "Beg your pardon, sir, but this here officer o' yourn in the gam-booge tops, 'ull never earn a decent livin' as a master o' the ceremonies any vere. This here, sir," continued Mr. Weller, thrusting Grummer aside, and addressing the magistrate with pleasant familiarity. "This here is S. Pickvick, Esquire; this here's Mr. Tupman; that 'ere's Mr. Snodgrass;

and furdur on, next him on the t'other side, Mr. Winkle—all wery nice gen'l'm'n, sir, as you'll be wery happy to have the acquaintance on; so the sooner you commits these here officers o' yourn to the tread-mill for a month or two, the sooner we shall begin to be on a pleasant understanding. Business first, pleasure arterwards, as King Richard the Third said wen he stabbed the t'other king in the Tower, afore he smothered the babbies."

At the conclusion of this address, Mr. Weller brushed his hat with his right elbow, and nodded benignly to Jinks, who had heard him throughout, with unspeakable awe.

"Who is this man, Grummer?" said the magistrate.

"Wery desp'rate ch'racter, your wash-up," replied Grummer. "He attempted to rescue the prisoners, and assaulted the officers; so we took him into custody, and brought him here."

"You did quite right," replied the magistrate. "He is evidently a desperate ruffian."

"He is my servant, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, angrily.

"Oh! he is your servant, is he?" said Mr. Nupkins. "A conspiracy to defeat the ends of justice, and murder its officers. Pickwick's servant. Put that down, Mr. Jinks."

Mr. Jinks did so.

"What's your name, fellow?" thundered Mr. Nupkins.

"Veller," replied Sam.

"A very good name for the Newgate Calendar," said Mr. Nupkins.

This was a joke; so Jinks, Grummer, Dubbley, all the specials, and Muzzle, went into fits of laughter of five minutes' duration.

"Put down his name, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate.

"Two L's, old feller," said Sam.

Here an unfortunate special laughed again, whereupon the magistrate threatened to commit him, instantly. It is a dangerous thing to laugh at the wrong man, in these cases.

"Where do you live?" said the magistrate.

"Vare-ever I can," replied Sam.

"Put down that, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate, who was fast rising into a rage.

"Score it under," said Sam.

"He is a vagabond, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate. "He is a vagabond on his own statement; is he not, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then I'll commit him. I'll commit him as such," said Mr. Nupkins.

"This is a very impartial country for justice," said Sam. "There ain't a magistrate goin' as don't commit himself, twice as often as he commits other people."

At this sally another special laughed, and then tried to look so supernaturally solemn, that the magistrate detected him immediately.

"Grummer," said Mr. Nupkins, reddening with passion, "how dare you select such an inefficient and disreputable person for a special constable, as that man? How dare you do it, sir?"

"I am very sorry, your wash-up," stammered Grummer.

"Very sorry!" said the furious magistrate. "You shall repent of this neglect of duty, Mr. Grummer; you shall be made an example of. Take that fellow's staff away. He's drunk. You're drunk, fellow."

"I am not drunk, your worship," said the man.

"You *are* drunk," returned the magistrate. "How dare you say you are not drunk, sir, when I say you are? Doesn't he smell of spirits, Grummer?"

"Horrid, your wash-up," replied Grummer, who had a vague impression that there was a smell of rum somewhere.

"I knew he did," said Mr. Nupkins. "I saw he was drunk when he first came into the room, by his excited eye. Did you observe his excited eye, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I haven't touched a drop of spirits this morning," said the man, who was as sober a fellow as need be.

"How dare you tell me a falsehood?" said Mr. Nupkins. "Isn't he drunk at this moment, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Jinks.

"Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate, "I shall commit that man, for contempt. Make out his committal, Mr. Jinks."

And committed the special would have been, only Jinks, who was the magistrate's adviser (having had a legal education of three years in a country attorney's office), whispered the magistrate that he thought it wouldn't do; so the magistrate made a speech, and said, that in consideration of the special's family, he would merely reprimand and discharge him. Accordingly, the special was abused, vehemently, for a quarter of an hour, and sent about his business; and Grum-

mer, Dubbley, Muzzle, and all the other specials murmured their admiration of the magnanimity of Mr. Nupkins.

"Now, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate, "swear Grummer."

Grummer was sworn directly; but as Grummer wandered, and Mr. Nupkins' dinner was nearly ready, Mr. Nupkins cut the matter short, by putting leading questions to Grummer, which Grummer answered as nearly in the affirmative as he could. So the examination went off, all very smooth and comfortable, and two assaults were proved against Mr. Weller, and a threat against Mr. Winkle, and a push against Mr. Snodgrass. When all this was done to the magistrate's satisfaction, the magistrate and Mr. Jinks consulted in whispers.

The consultation having lasted about ten minutes, Mr. Jinks retired to his end of the table; and the magistrate, with a preparatory cough, drew himself up in his chair, and was proceeding to commence his address, when Mr. Pickwick interposed.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for interrupting you," said Mr. Pickwick; "but before you proceed to express, and act upon, any opinion you may have formed on the statements which have been made here, I must claim my right to be heard, so far as I am personally concerned."

"Hold your tongue, sir," said the magistrate, peremptorily.

"I must submit to you, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Hold your tongue, sir," interposed the magistrate, "or I shall order an officer to remove you."

"You may order your officers to do whatever you please, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; "and I have no doubt, from the specimen I have had of the subordination preserved amongst them, that whatever you order, they will execute, sir; but I shall take the liberty, sir, of claiming my right to be heard, until I am removed by force."

"Pickwick and principle!" exclaimed Mr. Weller, in a very audible voice.

"Sam, be quiet," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Dumb as a drum with a hole in it, sir," replied Sam.

Mr. Nupkins looked at Mr. Pickwick with a gaze of intense astonishment, at his displaying such unwonted temerity; and was apparently about to return a very angry reply, when Mr. Jinks pulled him by the sleeve, and whispered something in his ear. To this, the magistrate returned a half-

audible answer, and then the whispering was renewed. Jinks was evidently remonstrating.

At length the magistrate, gulping down, with a very bad grace, his disinclination to hear anything more, turned to Mr. Pickwick, and said sharply: "What do you want to say?"

"First," said Mr. Pickwick, sending a look through his spectacles, under which even Nupkins quailed. "First, I wish to know what I and my friend have been brought here for?"

"Must I tell him?" whispered the magistrate to Jinks.

"I think you had better, sir," whispered Jinks to the magistrate.

"An information has been sworn before me," said the magistrate, "that it is apprehended you are going to fight a duel, and that the other man, Tupman, is your aider and abettor in it. Therefore—er, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Therefore, I call upon you both, to—I think that's the course, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"To—to—what, Mr. Jinks?" said the magistrate, pettishly.

"To find bail, sir."

"Yes. Therefore, I call upon you both—as I was about to say, when I was interrupted by my clerk—to find bail."

"Good bail," whispered Mr. Jinks.

"I shall require good bail," said the magistrate.

"Town's-people," whispered Jinks.

"They must be town's-people," said the magistrate.

"Fifty pounds each," whispered Jinks, "and householders, of course."

"I shall require two sureties of fifty pounds each," said the magistrate aloud, with great dignity, "and they must be householders, of course."

"But, bless my heart, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, who, together with Mr. Tupman, was all amazement and indignation; "we are perfect strangers in this town. I have as little knowledge of any householders here, as I have intention of fighting a duel with anybody."

"I dare say," replied the magistrate, "I dare say—don't you, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Have you anything more to say?" inquired the magistrate.

Mr. Pickwick *had* a great deal more to say, which he would no doubt have said, very little to his own advantage, or the magistrate's satisfaction, if he had not, the moment he ceased speaking, been pulled by the sleeve by Mr. Weller, with whom he was immediately engaged in so earnest a conversation, that he suffered the magistrate's inquiry to pass wholly unnoticed. Mr. Nupkins was not the man to ask a question of the kind twice over; and so, with another preparatory cough, he proceeded, amidst the reverential and admiring silence of the constables, to pronounce his decision.

He should fine Weller two pounds for the first assault, and three pounds for the second. He should fine Winkle two pounds, and Snodgrass one pound, besides requiring them to enter into their own recognizances to keep the peace towards all his Majesty's subjects, and especially towards his liege servant, Daniel Grummer. Pickwick and Tupman he had already held to bail.

Immediately on the magistrate ceasing to speak, Mr. Pickwick, with a smile mantling on his again good-humoured countenance, stepped forward, and said :

"I beg the magistrate's pardon, but may I request a few minutes' private conversation with him, on a matter of deep importance to himself?"

"What?" said the magistrate.

Mr. Pickwick repeated his request.

"This is a most extraordinary request," said the magistrate. "A private interview?"

"A private interview," replied Mr. Pickwick, firmly; "only, as a part of the information which I wish to communicate is derived from my servant, I should wish him to be present."

The magistrate looked at Mr. Jinks; Mr. Jinks looked at the magistrate; the officers looked at each other in amazement. Mr. Nupkins turned suddenly pale. Could the man Weller, in a moment of remorse, have divulged some secret conspiracy for his assassination? It was a dreadful thought. He was a public man: and he turned paler, as he thought of Julius Cæsar and Mr. Perceval.

The magistrate looked at Mr. Pickwick again, and beckoned Mr. Jinks.

"What do you think of this request, Mr. Jinks?" murmured Mr. Nupkins.

Mr. Jinks, who didn't exactly know what to think of it, and was afraid he might offend, smiled feebly, after

a dubious fashion, and, screwing up the corners of his mouth, shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate gravely, "you are an ass."

At this little expression of opinion, Mr. Jinks smiled again—rather more feebly than before—and edged himself by degrees, back into his own corner.

Mr. Nupkins debated the matter within himself for a few seconds, and then, rising from his chair, and requesting Mr. Pickwick and Sam to follow him, led the way into a small room which opened into the justice parlour. Desiring Mr. Pickwick to walk to the upper end of the little apartment, and holding his hand upon the half-closed door, that he might be able to effect an immediate escape, in case there was the least tendency to a display of hostilities, Mr. Nupkins expressed his readiness to hear the communication, whatever it might be.

"I will come to the point at once, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; "it affects yourself, and your credit, materially. I have every reason to believe, sir, that you are harbouring in your house, a gross impostor!"

"Two," interrupted Sam. "Mulberry agin all natur, for tears and willainny!"

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "if I am to render myself intelligible to this gentleman, I must beg you to control your feelings."

"Wery sorry, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "but when I think o' that ere Job, I can't help opening the walve a inch or two."

"In one word, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "is my servant right in suspecting that a certain Captain Fitz-Marshall is in the habit of visiting here? Because," added Mr. Pickwick, as he saw that Mr. Nupkins was about to offer a very indignant interruption, "because, if he be, I know that person to be a—"

"Hush, hush," said Mr. Nupkins, closing the door. "Know him to be what, sir?"

"An unprincipled adventurer—a dishonourable character—a man who preys upon society, and makes easily-deceived people his dupes, sir; his absurd, his foolish, his wretched dupes, sir," said the excited Mr. Pickwick.

"Dear me," said Mr. Nupkins, turning very red, and altering his whole manner directly. "Dear me, Mr.—"

"Pickvick," said Sam.

"Pickwick," said the magistrate, "dear me, Mr. Pickwick

—pray take a seat—you cannot mean this? Captain Fitz-Marshall?”

“Don’t call him a cap’en,” said Sam, “nor Fitz-Marshall neither; he ain’t neither one nor t’other. He’s a strolling actor, he is, and his name’s Jingle; and if ever there was a wolf in a mulberry suit, that ere Job Trotter’s him.”

“It is very true, sir,” said Mr. Pickwick, replying to the magistrate’s look of amazement; “my only business in this town, is to expose the person of whom we now speak.”

Mr. Pickwick proceeded to pour into the horror-stricken ear of Mr. Nupkins, an abridged account of Mr. Jingle’s atrocities. He related how he had first met him; how he had eloped with Miss Wardle; how he had cheerfully resigned the lady for a pecuniary consideration; how he had entrapped himself into a lady’s boarding-school at midnight; and how he (Mr. Pickwick) now felt it his duty to expose his assumption of his present name and rank.

As the narrative proceeded, all the warm blood in the body of Mr. Nupkins tingled up into the very tips of his ears. He had picked up the captain at a neighbouring race-course. Charmed with his long list of aristocratic acquaintance, his extensive travel, and his fashionable demeanour, Mrs. Nupkins and Miss Nupkins had exhibited Captain Fitz-Marshall, and quoted Captain Fitz-Marshall, and hurled Captain Fitz-Marshall at the devoted heads of their select circle of acquaintance, until their bosom friends, Mrs. Porkenham and the Miss Porkenhams, and Mr. Sidney Porkenham, were ready to burst with jealousy and despair. And now, to hear, after all, that he was a needy adventurer, a strolling player, and if not a swindler, something so very like it, that it was hard to tell the difference! Heavens! What would the Porkenhams say! What would be the triumph of Mr. Sidney Porkenham when he found that his addresses had been slighted for such a rival! How should he, Nupkins, meet the eye of old Porkenham at the next Quarter Sessions! And what a handle would it be for the opposition magisterial party, if the story got abroad!

“But after all,” said Mr. Nupkins, brightening for a moment, after a long pause; “after all, this is a mere statement. Captain Fitz-Marshall is a man of very engaging manners, and, I dare say, has many enemies. What proof have you of the truth of these representations?”

“Confront me with him,” said Mr. Pickwick, “that is all

I ask, and all I require. Confront him with me and my friends here; you will want no further proof."

"Why," said Mr. Nupkins, "that might be very easily done, for he will be here to-night, and then there would be no occasion to make the matter public, just—just—for the young man's own sake, you know. I—I—should like to consult Mrs. Nupkins on the propriety of the step, in the first instance, though. At all events, Mr. Pickwick, we must despatch this legal business before we can do anything else. Pray step back into the next room."

Into the next room they went.

"Grummer," said the magistrate, in an awful voice.

"Your wash-up," replied Grummer, with the smile of a favourite.

"Come, come, sir," said the magistrate sternly, "don't let me see any of this levity here. It is very unbecoming, and I can assure you that you have very little to smile at. Was the account you gave me just now strictly true? Now be careful, sir?"

"Your wash-up," stammered Grummer, "I—"

"Oh, you are confused, are you?" said the magistrate.

"Mr. Jinks, you observe this confusion?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Jinks.

"Now," said the magistrate, "repeat your statement, Grummer, and again I warn you to be careful. Mr. Jinks, take his words down."

The unfortunate Grummer proceeded to re-state his complaint, but, what between Mr. Jinks's taking down his words, and the magistrate's taking them up; his natural tendency to rambling, and his extreme confusion; he managed to get involved, in something under three minutes, in such a mass of entanglement and contradiction, that Mr. Nupkins at once declared he didn't believe him. So the fines were remitted, and Mr. Jinks found a couple of bail in no time. And all these solemn proceedings having been satisfactorily concluded, Mr. Grummer was ignominiously ordered out—an awful instance of the instability of human greatness, and the uncertain tenure of great men's favour.

Mrs. Nupkins was a majestic female in a pink gauze turban and a light brown wig. Miss Nupkins possessed all her mamma's haughtiness without the turban, and all her ill-nature without the wig; and whenever the exercise

of these two amiable qualities involved mother and daughter in some unpleasant dilemma, as they not unfrequently did. they both concurred in laying the blame on the shoulders of Mr. Nupkins. Accordingly, when Mr. Nupkins sought Mrs. Nupkins, and detailed the communication which had been made by Mr. Pickwick, Mrs. Nupkins suddenly recollected that she had always expected something of the kind; that she had always said it would be so; that her advice was never taken; that she really did not know what Mr. Nupkins supposed she was; and so forth.

"The idea!" said Miss Nupkins, forcing a tear of very scanty proportions into the corner of each eye; "the idea of my being made such a fool of!"

"Ah! you may thank your papa, my dear," said Mrs. Nupkins; "how have I implored and begged that man to inquire into the Captain's family connections; how have I urged and entreated him to take some decisive step! I am quite certain nobody would believe it—quite."

"But, my dear," said Mr. Nupkins.

"Don't talk to me, you aggravating thing, don't!" said Mrs. Nupkins.

"My love," said Mr. Nupkins, "you professed yourself very fond of Captain Fitz-Marshall. You have constantly asked him here, my dear, and you have lost no opportunity of introducing him elsewhere."

"Didn't I say so, Henrietta?" cried Mrs. Nupkins, appealing to her daughter, with the air of a much-injured female. "Didn't I say that your papa would turn round and lay all this at my door? Didn't I say so?" Here Mrs. Nupkins sobbed.

"Oh pa!" remonstrated Miss Nupkins. And here she sobbed too.

"Isn't it too much, when he has brought all this disgrace and ridicule upon us, to taunt *me* with being the cause of it?" exclaimed Mrs. Nupkins.

"How can we ever show ourselves in society!" said Miss Nupkins.

"How can we face the Porkenhams!" cried Mrs. Nupkins.

"Or the Griggs's!" cried Miss Nupkins.

"Or the Slummintowkens!" cried Mrs. Nupkins. "But what does your papa care! What is it to *him*!" At this dreadful reflection, Mrs. Nupkins wept with mental anguish, and Miss Nupkins followed on the same side.

Mrs. Nupkins's tears continued to gush forth, with great velocity, until she had gained a little time to think the matter over: when she decided, in her own mind, that the best thing to do would be to ask Mr. Pickwick and his friends to remain until the Captain's arrival, and then to give Mr. Pickwick the opportunity he sought. If it appeared that he had spoken truly, the Captain could be turned out of the house without noising the matter abroad, and they could easily account to the Porkenhams for his disappearance, by saying that he had been appointed, through the Court influence of his family, to the Governor-Generalship of Sierra Leone, or Saugur Point, or any other of those salubrious climates which enchant Europeans so much that, when they once get there, they can hardly ever prevail upon themselves to come back again.

When Mrs. Nupkins dried up her tears, Miss Nupkins dried up *hers*, and Mr. Nupkins was very glad to settle the matter as Mrs. Nupkins had proposed. So Mr. Pickwick and his friends, having washed off all marks of their late encounter, were introduced to the ladies, and soon afterwards to their dinner; and Mr. Weller, whom the magistrate with his peculiar sagacity had discovered in half an hour to be one of the finest fellows alive, was consigned to the care and guardianship of Mr. Muzzle, who was specially enjoined to take him below, and make much of him.

"How de do, sir?" said Mr. Muzzle, as he conducted Mr. Weller down the kitchen stairs.

"Why, no considerable change has taken place in the state of my system, since I see you cocked up behind your governor's chair in the parlour, a little vile ago," replied Sam.

"You will excuse my not taking more notice of you then," said Mr. Muzzle. "You see, master hadn't introduced us, then. Lord, how fond he is of you, Mr. Weller, to be sure!"

"Ah," said Sam, "what a pleasant chap he is!"

"Ain't he?" replied Mr. Muzzle.

"So much humour," said Sam.

"And such a man to speak," said Mr. Muzzle. "How his ideas flow, don't they?"

"Wonderful," replied Sam; "they come's a pouring out, knocking each other's heads so fast, that they seems to stun one another; you hardly know what he's arter, do you?"

"That's the great merit of his style of speaking," rejoined Mr. Muzzle. "Take care of the last step, Mr. Weller. Would you like to wash your hands, sir, before we join the ladies? Here's a sink, with the water laid on, sir, and a clean jack towel behind the door."

"Ah! perhaps I may as well have a rinse," replied Mr. Weller, applying plenty of yellow soap to the towel, and rubbing away, till his face shone again. "How many ladies are there?"

"Only two in our kitchen," said Mr. Muzzle, "cook and 'ousemaid. We keep a boy to do the dirty work, and a gal besides, but they dine in the washus."

"Oh, they dines in the washus, do they?" said Mr. Weller.

"Yes," replied Mr. Muzzle, "we tried 'em at our table when they first come, but we couldn't keep 'em. The gal's manners is dreadful vulgar; and the boy breathes so very hard while he's eating, that we found it impossible to sit at table with him."

"Young grampus!" said Mr. Weller.

"Oh, dreadful," rejoined Mr. Muzzle; "but that is the worst of country service, Mr. Weller; the juniors is always so very savage. This way, sir, if you please; this way."

Preceding Mr. Weller, with the utmost politeness, Mr. Muzzle conducted him into the kitchen.

"Mary," said Mr. Muzzle to the pretty servant-girl, "this is Mr. Weller; a gentleman as master has sent down, to be made as comfortable as possible."

"And your master's a knowin' hand, and has just sent me to the right place," said Mr. Weller, with a glance of admiration at Mary. "If I wos master o' this here house, I should always find the materials for comfort vere Mary wos."

"Lor, Mr. Weller," said Mary, blushing.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated the cook.

"Bless me, cook, I forgot you," said Mr. Muzzle. "Mr. Weller, let me introduce you."

"How are you, ma'am," said Mr. Weller. "Werry glad to see you, indeed, and hope our acquaintance may be a long 'un, as the gen'l'm'n said to the fi' pun' note."

When this ceremony of introduction had been gone through, the cook and Mary retired into the back kitchen to titter, for ten minutes; then returning, all giggles and blushes, they sat down to dinner.

Mr. Weller's easy manners and conversational powers had such irresistible influence with his new friends, that before the dinner was half over, they were on footing of perfect intimacy, and in possession of a full account of the delinquency of Job Trotter.

"I never could a-bear that Job," said Mary.

"No more you never ought to, my dear," replied Mr. Weller.

"Why not?" inquired Mary.

"Cos ugliness and svindlin' never ought to be formiliar with elegance and wirtew," replied Mr. Weller. "Ought they, Mr. Muzzle?"

"Not by no means," replied that gentleman.

Here Mary laughed, and said the cook had made her; and the cook laughed, and said she hadn't.

"I han't got a glass," said Mary.

"Drink with me, my dear," said Mr. Weller. "Put your lips to this here tumbler, and then I can kiss you by deputy."

"For shame, Mr. Weller!" said Mary.

"What's a shame, my dear?"

"Talkin' in that way."

"Nonsense; it ain't no harm. It's natur; ain't it, cook?"

"Don't ask me imperence," replied the cook in a high state of delight: and hereupon the cook and Mary laughed again, till what between the beer, and the cold meat, and the laughter combined, the latter young lady was brought to the verge of choking—an alarming crisis from which she was only recovered by sundry pats on the back, and other necessary attentions, most delicately administered by Mr. Samuel Weller.

In the midst of all this jollity and conviviality, a loud ring was heard at the garden-gate: to which the young gentleman who took his meals in the wash-house, immediately responded. Mr. Weller was in the height of his attentions to the pretty housemaid; Mr. Muzzle was busy doing the honours of the table; and the cook had just paused to laugh, in the very act of raising a huge morsel to her lips; when the kitchen-door opened, and in walked Mr. Job Trotter.

We have said in walked Mr. Job Trotter, but the statement is not distinguished by our usual scrupulous adherence

to fact. The door opened and Mr. Trotter appeared. He *would* have walked in, and was in the very act of doing so, indeed, when catching sight of Mr. Weller, he involuntarily shrank back a pace or two, and stood gazing on the unexpected scene before him, perfectly motionless with amazement and terror.

"Here he is!" said Sam, rising with great glee. "Why we were that wery moment a speaking o' you. How are you? Where *have* you been? Come in."

Laying his hand on the mulberry collar of the unresisting Job, Mr. Weller dragged him into the kitchen; and, locking the door, handed the key to Mr. Muzzle, who very coolly buttoned it up in a side-pocket.

"Well, here's a game!" cried Sam. "Only think o' my master havin' the pleasure o' meeting your'n, up stairs, and me havin' the joy o' meetin' you down here. How *are* you gettin' on, and how *is* the chandlery bis'ness likely to do? Well, I am so glad to see you. How happy you look. It's quite a treat to see you; ain't it, Mr. Muzzle?"

"Quite," said Mr. Muzzle.

"So cheerful he is!" said Sam.

"In such good spirits!" said Muzzle.

"And so glad to see *us*—that makes it so much more comfortable," said Sam. "Sit down; sit down."

Mr. Trotter suffered himself to be forced into a chair by the fireside. He cast his small eyes, first on Mr. Weller, and then on Mr. Muzzle, but said nothing.

"Well, now," said Sam, "afore these here ladies, I should jest like to ask you, as a sort of curiosity, wether you don't con-sider yourself as nice and well-behaved a young gen'l'm'n as ever used a pink check pocket-handkerchief, and the number four collection?"

"And as was ever a-going to be married to a cook," said that lady, indignantly. "The willin'!"

"And leave off his evil ways, and set up in the chandlery line, arterwards," said the house-maid.

"Now, I'll tell you what it is, young man," said Mr. Muzzle, solemnly, enraged at the last two allusions, "this here lady (pointing to the cook) keeps company with me; and when you presume, sir, to talk of keeping chandlers' shops with her, you injure me in one of the most delicatest points in which one man can injure another. Do you understand me, sir?"



JOB TROTTER ENCOUNTERS SAM IN MR. MUZZLE'S KITCHEN

Here Mr. Muzzle, who had a great notion of his eloquence, in which he imitated his master, paused for a reply.

But Mr. Trotter made no reply. So Mr. Muzzle proceeded in a solemn manner :

"It's very probable, sir, that you won't be wanted up-stairs for several minutes, sir, because *my* master is at this moment particularly engaged in settling the hash of *your* master, sir ; and therefore you'll have leisure, sir, for a little private talk with me, sir. Do you understand me, sir ?"

Mr. Muzzle again paused for a reply ; and again Mr. Trotter disappointed him.

"Well, then," said Mr. Muzzle, "I'm very sorry to have to explain myself before ladies, but the urgency of the case will be *my* excuse. The back kitchen's empty, sir. If you will step in there, sir, Mr. Weller will see fair, and we can have mutual satisfaction 'till the bell rings. Follow me, sir !"

As Mr. Muzzle uttered these words, he took a step or two towards the door ; and by way of saving time, began to pull off his coat as he walked along.

Now, the cook no sooner heard the concluding words of this desperate challenge, and saw Mr. Muzzle about to put it into execution, than she uttered a loud and piercing shriek, and rushing on Mr. Job Trotter, who rose from his chair on the instant, tore and buffeted his large flat face, with an energy peculiar to excited females, and twining her hands in his long black hair, tore therefrom about enough to make five or six dozen of the very largest-sized mourning-rings. Having accomplished this feat with all the ardour which her devoted love for Mr. Muzzle inspired, she staggered back ; and being a lady of very excitable and delicate feelings, she instantly fell under the dresser, and fainted away.

At this moment, the bell rang.

"That's for you, Job Trotter," said Sam ; and before Mr. Trotter could offer remonstrance or reply—even before he had time to stanch the wounds inflicted by the insensible lady—Sam seized one arm and Mr. Muzzle the other ; and one pulling before, and the other pushing behind, they conveyed him up-stairs, and into the parlour.

It was an impressive tableau. Alfred Jingle, Esquire, alias Captain Fitz-Marshall, was standing near the door with his hat in his hand, and a smile on his face, wholly un-

moved by his very unpleasant situation. Confronting him, stood Mr. Pickwick, who had evidently been inculcating some high moral lesson ; for his left hand was beneath his coat tail, and his right extended in air, as was his wont when delivering himself of an impressive address. At a little distance, stood Mr. Tupman with indignant countenance, carefully held back by his two younger friends ; at the further end of the room were Mr. Nupkins, Mrs. Nupkins, and Miss Nupkins, gloomily grand, and savagely vexed.

"What prevents me," said Mr. Nupkins, with magisterial dignity, as Job was brought in: "what prevents me from detaining these men as rogues and impostors ? It is a foolish mercy. What prevents me ?"

"Pride, old fellow, pride," replied Jingle, quite at his ease. "Wouldn't do—no go—caught a captain, eh ?—ha ! ha ! very good—husband for daughter—biter bit—make it public—not for worlds—look stupid—very !"

"Wretch," said Mrs. Nupkins, "we scorn your base insinuations."

"I always hated him," added Henrietta.

"Oh, of course," said Jingle. "Tall young man—old lover—Sidney Porkenham—rich—fine fellow—not so rich as captain, though ?—turn him away—off with him—anything for captain—nothing like captain anywhere—all the girls—raving mad—eh, Job ?"

Here Mr. Jingle laughed very heartily ; and Job, rubbing his hands with delight, uttered the first sound he had given vent to, since he entered the house—a low noiseless chuckle, which seemed to intimate that he enjoyed his laugh too much, to let any of it escape in sound.

"Mr. Nupkins," said the elder lady, "this is not a fit conversation for the servants to overhear. Let these wretches be removed."

"Certainly, my dear," said Mr. Nupkins. "Muzzle !"

"Your worship."

"Open the front door."

"Yes, your worship."

"Leave the house !" said Mr. Nupkins, waving his hand emphatically.

Jingle smiled, and moved towards the door

"Stay !" said Mr. Pickwick.

Jingle stopped.

"I might," said Mr. Pickwick, "have taken a much

greater revenge for the treatment I have experienced at your hands, and that of your hypocritical friend there."

Job Trotter bowed with great politeness, and laid his hand upon his heart.

"I say," said Mr. Pickwick, growing gradually angry, "that I might have taken a greater revenge, but I content myself with exposing you, which I consider a duty I owe to society. This is a leniency, sir, which I hope you will remember."

When Mr. Pickwick arrived at this point, Job Trotter, with facetious gravity applied his hand to his ear, as if desirous not to lose a syllable he uttered.

"And I have only to add, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, now thoroughly angry, "that I consider you a rascal, and a— a ruffian—and—and worse than any man I ever saw, or heard of, except that pious and sanctified vagabond in the mulberry livery."

"Ha! ha!" said Jingle, "good fellow, Pickwick—fine heart—stout old boy—but must *not* be passionate—bad thing, very—bye, bye—see you again some day—keep up your spirits—now, Job—trot!"

With these words, Mr. Jingle stuck on his hat in the old fashion, and strode out of the room. Job Trotter paused, looked round, smiled, and then with a bow of mock solemnity to Mr. Pickwick, and a wink to Mr. Weller, the audacious slyness of which baffles all description, followed the footsteps of his hopeful master.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, as Mr. Weller was following.

"Sir."

"Stay here."

Mr. Weller seemed uncertain.

"Stay here," repeated Mr. Pickwick.

"Mayn't I polish that ere Job off, in the front garden?" said Mr. Weller.

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Mayn't I kick him out o' the gate, sir?" said Mr. Weller.

"Not on any account," replied his master.

For the first time since his engagement, Mr. Weller looked, for a moment, discontented and unhappy. But his countenance immediately cleared up; for the wily Mr. Muzzle, by concealing himself behind the street door, and rushing violently out, at the right instant, contrived with great dexterity to overturn both Mr. Jingle and his attendant,

down the flight of steps, into the American aloes tubs that stood beneath.

"Having discharged my duty, sir," said Mr. Pickwick to Mr. Nupkins, "I will, with my friends, bid you farewell. While we thank you for such hospitality as we have received, permit me to assure you, in our joint names, that we should not have accepted it, or have consented to extricate ourselves in this way, from our previous dilemma, had we not been impelled by a strong sense of duty. We return to London to-morrow. Your secret is safe with us."

Having thus entered his protest against their treatment of the morning, Mr. Pickwick bowed low to the ladies, and notwithstanding the solicitations of the family, left the room with his friends.

"Get your hat, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It's below stairs, sir," said Sam, and he ran down after it.

Now, there was nobody in the kitchen, but the pretty housemaid; and as Sam's hat was mislaid, he had to look for it; and the pretty housemaid lighted him. They had to look all over the place for the hat. The pretty housemaid, in her anxiety to find it, went down on her knees, and turned over all the things that were heaped together in a little corner by the door. It was an awkward corner. You couldn't get at it without shutting the door first.

"Here it is," said the pretty housemaid. "This is it, ain't it?"

"Let me look," said Sam.

The pretty housemaid had stood the candle on the floor; as it gave a very dim light, Sam was obliged to go down on *his* knees before he could see whether it really was his own hat or not. It was a remarkably small corner, and so—it was nobody's fault but the man's who built the house—Sam and the pretty housemaid were necessarily very close together.

"Yes, this is it," said Sam. "Good bye!"

"Good bye!" said the pretty housemaid.

"Good bye!" said Sam; and as he said it, he dropped the hat that had cost so much trouble in looking for.

"How awkward you are," said the pretty housemaid. "You'll lose it again, if you don't take care."

So, just to prevent his losing it again, she put it on for him.

Whether it was that the pretty housemaid's face looked

prettier still, when it was raised towards Sam's, or whether it was the accidental consequence of their being so near to each other, is matter of uncertainty to this day ; but Sam kissed her.

"You don't mean to say you did that on purpose," said the pretty housemaid, blushing.

"No, I didn't then," said Sam ; "but I will now."

So he kissed her again.

"Sam !" said Mr. Pickwick, calling over the banisters.

"Coming, sir," replied Sam rushing up stairs.

"How long you have been " said Mr. Pickwick.

"There was something behind the door, sir, which prevented our getting it open, for ever so long, sir," replied Sam.

And this was the first passage of Mr. Weller's first love.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHICH CONTAINS A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE PROGRESS OF THE ACTION OF BARDELL AGAINST PICKWICK

HAVING accomplished the main end and object of his journey, by the exposure of Jingle, Mr. Pickwick resolved on immediately returning to London, with the view of becoming acquainted with the proceedings which had been taken against him, in the mean time, by Messrs. Dodson and Fogg. Acting upon this resolution with all the energy and decision of his character, he mounted to the back seat of the first coach which left Ipswich on the morning after the memorable occurrences detailed at length in the two preceding chapters; and accompanied by his three friends, and Mr. Samuel Weller, arrived in the metropolis, in perfect health and safety, the same evening.

Here, the friends, for a short time, separated. Messrs. Tupman, Winkle, and Snodgrass repaired to their several homes to make such preparations as might be requisite for their forthcoming visit to Dingley Dell; and Mr. Pickwick and Sam took up their present abode in very good, old-fashioned, and comfortable quarters: to wit, the George and Vulture Tavern and Hotel, George Yard, Lombard Street.

Mr. Pickwick had dined, finished his second pint of particular port, pulled his silk handkerchief over his head, put his feet on the fender, and thrown himself back in an easy chair, when the entrance of Mr. Weller with his carpet bag, aroused him from his tranquil meditations.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Sir," said Mr. Weller.

"I have just been thinking, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "that having left a good many things at Mrs. Bardell's, in Goswell Street, I ought to arrange for taking them away, before I leave town again."

"Wery good, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I could send them to Mr. Tupman's, for the present, Sam," continued Mr. Pickwick, "but before we take them away, it is necessary that they should be looked up, and put together. I wish you would step up to Goswell Street, Sam, and arrange about it."

"At once, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"At once," replied Mr. Pickwick. "And stay, Sam," added Mr. Pickwick, pulling out his purse, "There is some rent to pay. The quarter is not due till Christmas, but you may pay it, and have done with it. A month's notice terminates my tenancy. Here it is, written out. Give it, and tell Mrs. Bardell she may put a bill up, as soon as she likes."

"Wery good, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "anythin' more, sir?"

"Nothing more, Sam."

Mr. Weller stepped slowly to the door, as if he expected something more; slowly opened it, slowly stepped out, and had slowly closed it within a couple of inches, when Mr. Pickwick called out,

"Sam."

"Sir," said Mr. Weller, stepping quickly back, and closing the door behind him.

"I have no objection, Sam, to your endeavouring to ascertain how Mrs. Bardell herself seems disposed towards me, and whether it is really probable that this vile and groundless action is to be carried to extremity. I say I do not object to your doing this, if you wish it, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam gave a short nod of intelligence, and left the room. Mr. Pickwick drew the silk handkerchief once more over his head, and composed himself for a nap. Mr. Weller promptly walked forth, to execute his commission.

It was nearly nine o'clock when he reached Goswell Street. A couple of candles were burning in the little front parlour, and a couple of caps were reflected on the window-blind. Mrs. Bardell had got company.

Mr. Weller knocked at the door, and after a pretty long interval—occupied by the party without, in whistling a tune, and by the party within, in persuading a refractory flat candle to allow itself to be lighted—a pair of small boots pattered over the floor-cloth, and Master Bardell presented himself.

"Well, young townskip," said Sam, "how's mother?"

"She's pretty well," replied Master Bardell, "so am I."

"Well, that's a mercy," said Sam; "tell her I want to speak to her, will you, my hinfant fernomenon?"

Master Bardell, thus adjured, placed the refractory flat candle on the bottom stair, and vanished into the front parlour with his message.

The two caps, reflected on the window-blind, were the respective head-dresses of a couple of Mrs. Bardell's most particular acquaintance, who had just stepped in, to have a quiet cup of tea, and a little warm supper of a couple of sets of pettitoes and some toasted cheese. The cheese was simmering and browning away, most delightfully, in a little Dutch oven before the fire; the pettitoes were getting on deliciously in a little tin saucepan on the hob; and Mrs. Bardell and her two friends were getting on very well, also, in a little quiet conversation about and concerning all their particular friends and acquaintance; when Master Bardell came back from answering the door, and delivered the message intrusted to him by Mr. Samuel Weller.

"Mr. Pickwick's servant!" said Mrs. Bardell, turning pale.

"Bless my soul!" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"Well, I raly would *not* ha' believed it, unless I had ha' happened to ha' been here!" said Mrs. Sanders.

Mrs. Cluppins was a little brisk, busy-looking woman; Mrs. Sanders was a big, fat, heavy-faced personage; and the two were the company.

Mrs. Bardell felt it proper to be agitated; and as none of the three exactly knew whether, under existing circumstances, any communication, otherwise than through Dodson and Fogg, ought to be held with Mr. Pickwick's servant, they were all rather taken by surprise. In this state of indecision, obviously the first thing to be done, was to thump the boy for finding Mr. Weller at the door. So his mother thumped him, and he cried melodiously.

"Hold your noise—do—you naughty creetur!" said Mrs. Bardell.

"Yes; don't worrit your poor mother," said Mrs. Sanders.

"She's quite enough to worrit her, as it is, without you, Tommy," said Mrs. Cluppins, with sympathising resignation.

"Ah! worse luck, poor lamb!" said Mrs. Sanders.

At all which moral reflections, Master Bardell howled the louder.

"Now, what *shall* I do?" said Mrs. Bardell to Mrs. Cluppins.

"*I* think you ought to see him," replied Mrs. Cluppins. "But on no account without a witness."

"*I* think two witnesses would be more lawful," said Mrs. Sanders, who, like the other friend, was bursting with curiosity.

"Perhaps he'd better come in here," said Mrs. Bardell.

"To be sure," replied Mrs. Cluppins, eagerly catching at the idea; "Walk in, young man; and shut the street door first, please."

Mr. Weller immediately took the hint; and presenting himself in the parlour, explained his business to Mrs. Bardell thus:

"Werry sorry to 'casion any personal inconwenience, ma'am, as the house-breaker said to the old lady when he put her on the fire; but as me and my governor's only jest come to town, and is jest going away agin, it can't be helped, you see."

"Of course, the young man can't help the faults of his master," said Mrs. Cluppins, much struck by Mr. Weller's appearance and conversation.

"Certainly not," chimed in Mrs. Sanders, who, from certain wistful glances at the little tin saucepan, seemed to be engaged in a mental calculation of the probable extent of the pettitoes, in the event of Sam's being asked to stop to supper.

"So all I've come about, is jest this here," said Sam, disregarding the interruption; "First, to give my governor's notice—there it is. Secondly, to pay the rent—here it is. Thirdly, to say as all his things is to be put together, and give to anybody as we sends for 'em. Fourthly, that you may let the place as soon as you like—and that's all."

"Whatever has happened," said Mrs. Bardell, "I always have said, and always will say, that in every respect but one, Mr. Pickwick has always behaved himself like a perfect gentleman. His money always was as good as the bank: always."

As Mrs. Bardell said this, she applied her handkerchief to her eyes, and went out of the room to get the receipt.

Sam well knew that he had only to remain quiet, and the women were sure to talk; so he looked alternately at the tin saucepan, the toasted cheese, the wall, and the ceiling, in profound silence.

"Poor dear!" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"Ah, poor thing!" replied Mrs. Sanders.

Sam said nothing. He saw they were coming to the subject.

"I raly cannot contain myself," said Mrs. Cluppins, "when I think of such perjury. I don't wish to say anything to make you uncomfortable, young man, but your master's an old brute, and I wish I had him here to tell him so."

"I wish you had," said Sam.

"To see how dreadful she takes on, going moping about, and taking no pleasure in nothing, except when her friends comes in, out of charity, to sit with her, and make her comfortable," resumed Mrs. Cluppins, glancing at the tin saucepan and the Dutch oven, "it's shocking!"

"Barbareous," said Mrs. Sanders.

"And your master, young man! A gentleman with money, as could never feel the expense of a wife, no more than nothing," continued Mrs. Cluppins, with great volubility; "why there ain't the faintest shade of an excuse for his behaviour! Why don't he marry her?"

"Ah," said Sam, "to be sure; that's the question."

"Question, indeed," retorted Mrs. Cluppins; "she'd question him, if she'd my spirit. Hows'ever, there is law for us women, mis'erable creeturs as they'd make us, if they could; and that your master will find out, young man, to his cost, afore he's six months older."

At this consolatory reflection, Mrs. Cluppins bridled up, and smiled at Mrs. Sanders, who smiled back again.

"The action's going on, and no mistake," thought Sam, as Mrs. Bardell re-entered with the receipt.

"Here's the receipt, Mr. Weller," said Mrs. Bardell, "and here's the change, and I hope you'll take a little drop of something to keep the cold out, if it's only for old acquaintance' sake, Mr. Weller."

Sam saw the advantage he should gain, and at once acquiesced; whereupon Mrs. Bardell produced, from a small closet, a black bottle and a wine glass; and so great was her abstraction, in her deep mental affliction, that, after filling Mr. Weller's glass, she brought out three more wine glasses, and filled them too.

"Lauk, Mrs. Bardell," said Mrs. Cluppins, "see what you've been and done!"

"Well, that is a good one!" ejaculated Mrs. Sanders.

"Ah, my poor head!" said Mrs. Bardell, with a faint smile.

Sam understood all this, of course, so he said at once, that he never could drink before supper, unless a lady drank with him. A great deal of laughing ensued, and Mrs. Sanders volunteered to humour him, so she took a slight sip out of her glass. Then, Sam said it must go all round, so they all took a slight sip. Then, little Mrs. Cluppins proposed as a toast, "Success to Bardell as in *Pickwick*;" and then the ladies emptied their glasses in honour of the sentiment, and got very talkative directly.

"I suppose you've heard what's going forward, Mr. Weller?" said Mrs. Bardell.

"I've heerd somethin' on it," replied Sam.

"It's a terrible thing to be dragged before the public, in that way, Mr. Weller," said Mrs. Bardell; "but I see now, that it's the only thing I ought to do, and my lawyers. Mr. Dodson and Fogg, tell me, that with the evidence as we shall call, we must succeed. I don't know what I should do, Mr. Weller, if I didn't."

The mere idea of Mrs. Bardell's failing in her action, affected Mrs. Sanders so deeply, that she was under the necessity of re-filling and re-emptying her glass immediately; feeling, as she said afterwards, that if she had'n't had the presence of mind to do so, she must have dropped.

"Ven is it expected to come on?" inquired Sam.

"Either in February or March," replied Mrs. Bardell.

"What a number of witnesses there'll be, won't there?" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"Ah, won't there!" replied Mrs. Sanders.

"And won't Mr. Dodson and Fogg be wild if the plaintiff shouldn't get it?" added Mrs. Cluppins, "when they do it all on speculation!"

"Ah! won't they!" said Mrs. Sanders.

"But the plaintiff must get it," resumed Mrs. Cluppins.

"I hope so," said Mrs. Bardell.

"Oh, there can't be any doubt about it," rejoined Mrs. Sanders.

"Vell," said Sam, rising and setting down his glass, "All I can say is, that I wish you *may* get it."

"Thank'ee, Mr. Weller," said Mrs. Bardell fervently.

"And of them Dodson and Fogg, as does these sort o' things on spec," continued Mr. Weller, "as well as for the

other kind and gen'rous people o' the same purfession, as sets people by the ears, free gratis for nothin', and sets their clerks to work to find out little disputes among their neighbours and acquaintances as vants settlin' by means o' law-suits—all I can say o' them is, that I vish they had the revard I'd give 'em."

"Ah, I wish they had the reward that every kind and generous heart would be inclined to bestow upon them!" said the gratified Mrs. Bardell.

"Amen to that," replied Sam, "and a fat and happy livin' they'd get out of it! Wish you good night, ladies."

To the great relief of Mrs. Sanders, Sam was allowed to depart without any reference, on the part of the hostess, to the pettitoes and toasted cheese: to which the ladies, with such juvenile assistance as Master Bardell could afford, soon afterwards rendered the amplest justice—indeed they wholly vanished before their strenuous exertions.

Mr. Weller went his way back to the George and Vulture, and faithfully recounted to his master, such indications of the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg, as he had contrived to pick up in his visit to Mrs. Bardell's. An interview with Mr. Perker, next day, more than confirmed Mr. Weller's statement; and Mr. Pickwick was fain to prepare for his Christmas visit to Dingley Dell, with the pleasant anticipation that some two or three months afterwards, an action brought against him for damages sustained by reason of a breach of promise of marriage, would be publicly tried in the Court of Common Pleas: the plaintiff having all the advantages derivable, not only from the force of circumstances, but from the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg to boot.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A GOOD-HUMOURED CHRISTMAS CHAPTER, CONTAINING
AN ACCOUNT OF A WEDDING, AND SOME OTHER SPORTS
BESIDE: WHICH ALTHOUGH IN THEIR WAY, EVEN AS
GOOD CUSTOMS AS MARRIAGE ITSELF, ARE NOT QUITE
SO RELIGIOUSLY KEPT UP IN THESE DEGENERATE
TIMES

As brisk as bees, if not altogether as light as fairies, did the four Pickwickians assemble on the morning of the twenty-second day of December, in the year of grace in which these, their faithfully-recorded adventures, were undertaken and accomplished. Christmas was close at hand, in all his bluff and hearty honesty; it was the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness; the old year was preparing, like an ancient philosopher, to call his friends around him, and amidst the sound of feasting and revelry to pass gently and calmly away. Gay and merry was the time, and gay and merry were at least four of the numerous hearts that were gladdened by its coming.

And numerous indeed are the hearts to which Christmas brings a brief season of happiness and enjoyment. How many families, whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide, in the restless struggles of life, are then reunited, and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual good-will, which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight, and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that the religious belief of the most civilised nations, and the rude traditions of the roughest savages, alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence, provided for the blest and happy! How many old recollections, and how many dormant sympathies, does Christmas time awaken!

We write these words now, many miles distant from the

spot at which, year after year, we met on that day, a merry and joyous circle. Many of the hearts that throbbed so gaily then, have ceased to beat; many of the looks that shone so brightly then, have ceased to glow; the hands we grasped have grown cold; the eyes we sought have hid their lustre in the grave; and yet the old house, the room, the merry voices and smiling faces, the jest, the laugh, the most minute and trivial circumstances connected with those happy meetings, crowd upon our mind at each recurrence of the season, as if the last assemblage had been but yesterday! Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveller, thousands of miles away, back to his own fire-side and his quiet home!

But we are so taken up and occupied with the good qualities of this saint Christmas, that we are keeping Mr. Pickwick and his friends waiting in the cold on the outside of the Muggleton coach, which they have just attained, well wrapped up in great-coats, shawls, and comforters. The portmanteaus and carpet-bags have been stowed away, and Mr. Weller and the guard are endeavouring to insinuate into the fore-boot a huge cod-fish several sizes too large for it—which is snugly packed up, in a long brown basket, with a layer of straw over the top, and which has been left to the last, in order that he may repose in safety on the half-dozen barrels of real native oysters, all the property of Mr. Pickwick, which have been arranged in regular order at the bottom of the receptacle. The interest displayed in Mr. Pickwick's countenance is most intense, as Mr. Weller and the guard try to squeeze the cod-fish into the boot, first head first, and then tail first, and then top upward, and then bottom upward, and then side-ways, and then long-ways, all of which artifices the implacable cod-fish sturdily resists, until the guard accidentally hits him in the very middle of the basket, whereupon he suddenly disappears into the boot, and with him, the head and shoulders of the guard himself, who, not calculating upon so sudden a cessation of the passive resistance of the cod-fish, experiences a very unexpected shock, to the unsmotherable delight of all the porters and bystanders. Upon this, Mr. Pickwick smiles with great good-humour, and drawing a shilling from his waistcoat pocket, begs the guard, as he picks himself out of the boot,

to drink his health in a glass of hot brandy and water ; at which the guard smiles too, and Messrs. Snodgrass, Winkle, and Tupman, all smile in company. The guard and Mr. Weller disappear for five minutes : most probably to get the hot brandy and water, for they smell very strongly of it, when they return, the coachman mounts to the box, Mr. Weller jumps up behind, the Pickwickians pull their coats round their legs and their shawls over their noses, the helpers pull the horse-cloths off, the coachman shouts out a cheery "All right," and away they go.

They have rumbled through the streets, and jolted over the stones, and at length reach the wide and open country. The wheels skim over the hard and frosty ground : and the horses, bursting into a canter at a smart crack of the whip, step along the road as if the load behind them : coach, passengers, cod-fish, oyster barrels, and all : were but a feather at their heels. They have descended a gentle slope, and enter upon a level, as compact and dry as a solid block of marble, two miles long. Another crack of the whip, and on they speed, at a smart gallop : the horses tossing their heads and rattling the harness, as if in exhilaration at the rapidity of the motion : while the coachman, holding whip and reins in one hand, takes off his hat with the other, and resting it on his knees, pulls out his handkerchief, and wipes his forehead : partly because he has a habit of doing it, and partly because it's as well to show the passengers how cool he is, and what an easy thing it is to drive four-in-hand, when you have had as much practice as he has. Having done this very leisurely (otherwise the effect would be materially impaired), he replaces his handkerchief, pulls on his hat, adjusts his gloves, squares his elbows, cracks the whip again, and on they speed, more merrily than before.

A few small houses, scattered on either side of the road, betoken the entrance to some town or village. The lively notes of the guard's key-bugle vibrate in the clear cold air, and wake up the old gentleman inside, who, carefully letting down the window-sash half-way, and standing sentry over the air, takes a short peep out, and then carefully pulling it up again, informs the other inside that they're going to change directly ; on which the other inside wakes himself up, and determines to postpone his next nap until after the stoppage. Again the bugle sounds lustily forth, and rouses the cottager's wife and children, who peep out at the house-door, and watch

the coach till it turns the corner, when they once more crouch round the blazing fire, and throw on another log of wood against father comes home ; while father himself, a full mile off, has just exchanged a friendly nod with the coachman, and turned round to take a good long stare at the vehicle as it whirls away.

. And now the bugle plays a lively air as the coach rattles through the ill-paved streets of a country-town ; and the coachman, undoing the buckle which keeps his ribands together, prepares to throw them off the moment he stops. Mr. Pickwick emerges from his coat collar, and looks about him with great curiosity ; perceiving which, the coachman informs Mr. Pickwick of the name of the town, and tells him it was market-day yesterday, both of which pieces of information Mr. Pickwick retails to his fellow-passengers ; whereupon they emerge from their coat collars too, and look about them also. Mr. Winkle, who sits at the extreme edge, with one leg dangling in the air, is nearly precipitated into the street, as the coach twists round the sharp corner by the cheesemonger's shop, and turns into the market-place ; and before Mr. Snodgrass, who sits next to him, has recovered from his alarm, they pull up at the inn yard, where the fresh horses, with cloths on, are already waiting. The coachman throws down the reins and gets down himself, and the other outside passengers drop down also : except those who have no great confidence in their ability to get up again : and they remain where they are, and stamp their feet against the coach to warm them—looking, with longing eyes and red noses, at the bright fire in the inn bar, and the sprigs of holly with red berries which ornament the window.

But the guard has delivered at the corn-dealer's shop the brown paper packet he took out of the little pouch which hangs over his shoulder by a leathern strap ; and has seen the horses carefully put to ; and has thrown on the pavement the saddle which was brought from London on the coach-roof ; and has assisted in the conference between the coachman and the hostler about the grey mare that hurt her off-fore-leg last Tuesday ; and he and Mr. Weller are all right behind, and the coachman is all right in front, and the old gentleman inside, who has kept the window down full two inches all this time, has pulled it up again, and the cloths are off, and they are all ready for starting, except the "two stout gentlemen," whom the coachman inquires after with some im-

patience. Hereupon the coachman, and the guard, and Sam Weller, and Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, and all the hostlers, and every one of the idlers, who are more in number than all the others put together, shout for the missing gentlemen as loud as they can bawl. A distant response is heard from the yard, and Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman come running down it, quite out of breath, for they have been having a glass of ale a-piece, and Mr. Pickwick's fingers are so cold that he has been full five minutes before he could find the sixpence to pay for it. The coachman shouts an admonitory "Now then, gen'l'm'n!" the guard re-echoes it; the old gentleman inside thinks it a very extraordinary thing that people *will* get down when they know there isn't time for it; Mr. Pickwick struggles up on one side, Mr. Tupman on the other; Mr. Winkle cries "All right;" and off they start. Shawls are pulled up, coat collars are re-adjusted, the pavement ceases, the houses disappear, and they are once again dashing along the open road, with the fresh clear air blowing in their faces, and gladdening their very hearts within them.

Such was the progress of Mr. Pickwick and his friends by the Muggleton Telegraph, on their way to Dingley Dell; and at three o'clock that afternoon they all stood, high and dry, safe and sound, hale and hearty, upon the steps of the Blue Lion, having taken on the road quite enough of ale and brandy to enable them to bid defiance to the frost that was binding up the earth in its iron fetters, and weaving its beautiful net-work upon the trees and hedges. Mr. Pickwick was busily engaged in counting the barrels of oysters and superintending the disinterment of the cod-fish, when he felt himself gently pulled by the skirts of the coat. Looking round, he discovered that the individual who resorted to this mode of catching his attention was no other than Mr. Wardle's favourite page, better known to the readers of this unvarnished history, by the distinguishing appellation of the fat boy.

"Aha!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Aha!" said the fat boy.

As he said it, he glanced from the cod-fish to the oyster-barrels, and chuckled joyously. He was fatter than ever.

"Well, you look rosy enough, my young friend," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I've been asleep, right in front of the tap-room fire,"

replied the fat boy, who had heated himself to the colour of a new chimney-pot, in the course of an hour's nap. "Master sent me over with the shay-cart, to carry your luggage up to the house. He'd ha' sent some saddle-horses, but he thought you'd rather walk, being a cold day."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily, for he remembered how they had travelled over nearly the same ground on a previous occasion. "Yes, we would rather walk. Here, Sam!"

"Sir," said Mr. Weller.

"Help Mr. Wardle's servant to put the packages into the cart, and then ride on with him. We will walk forward at once."

Having given this direction, and settled with the coachman, Mr. Pickwick and his three friends struck into the foot-path across the fields, and walked briskly away, leaving Mr. Weller and the fat boy confronted together for the first time. Sam looked at the fat boy with great astonishment, but without saying a word; and began to stow the luggage rapidly away in the cart, while the fat boy stood quietly by, and seemed to think it a very interesting sort of thing to see Mr. Weller working by himself.

"There," said Sam, throwing in the last carpet-bag. "There they are!"

"Yes," said the fat boy, in a very satisfied tone, "there they are."

"Vell, young twenty stun," said Sam, "you're a nice specimen of a prize boy, you are!"

"Thank'ee," said the fat boy.

"You ain't got nothin' on your mind as makes you fret yourself, have you?" inquired Sam.

"Not as I knows on," replied the fat boy.

"I should rayther ha' thought, to look at you, that you was a labourin' under an unrequited attachment to some young 'ooman," said Sam.

The fat boy shook his head.

"Vell," said Sam, "I'm glad to hear it. Do you ever drink anythin'?"

"I likes eating, better," replied the boy.

'Ah," said Sam, "I should ha' s'posed that; but what I mean is, should you like a drop of anythin' as 'd warm you? but I s'pose you never was cold, with all them elastic fixtures, was you?"

"Sometimes," replied the boy; "and I likes a drop of something, when it's good."

"Oh, you do, do you?" said Sam, "come this way, then!"

The Blue Lion tap was soon gained, and the fat boy swallowed a glass of liquor without so much as winking; a feat which considerably advanced him in Mr. Weller's good opinion. Mr. Weller having transacted a similar piece of business on his own account, they got into the cart.

"Can you drive?" said the fat boy.

"I should rayther think s o," replied Sam.

"There, then," said the fat boy, putting the reins in his hand, and pointing up a lane, "it's as straight as you can go; you can't miss it."

With these words, the fat boy laid himself affectionately down by the side of the cod-fish: and placing an oyster-barrel under his head for a pillow, fell asleep instantaneously.

"Well," said Sam, "of all the cool boys ever I set my eyes on, this here young gen'l'm'n is the coolest. Come, wake up, young dropsy!"

But as young dropsy evinced no symptoms of returning animation, Sam Weller sat himself down in front of the cart, and starting the old horse with a jerk of the rein, jogged steadily on, towards Manor Farm.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pickwick and his friends having walked their blood into active circulation, proceeded cheerfully on. The paths were hard; the grass was crisp and frosty; the air had a fine, dry, bracing coldness; and the rapid approach of the grey twilight (slate-coloured is a better term in frosty weather) made them look forward with pleasant anticipation to the comforts which awaited them at their hospitable entertainer's. It was the sort of afternoon that might induce a couple of elderly gentlemen, in a lonely field, to take off their great-coats and play at leap-frog in pure lightness of heart and gaiety; and we firmly believe that had Mr. Tupman at that moment proffered "a back," Mr. Pickwick would have accepted his offer with the utmost avidity.

However, Mr. Tupman did not volunteer any such accommodation, and the friends walked on, conversing merrily. As they turned into a lane they had to cross, the sound of many voices burst upon their ears; and before they had even had time to form a guess to whom they belonged, they walked into the very centre of the party who were expecting their arrival—a fact which was first notified to the Pick-

wickians, by the loud "Hurrah," which burst from old Wardle's lips, when they appeared in sight.

First, there was Wardle himself, looking, if possible, more jolly than ever; then there were Bella and her faithful Trundle; and, lastly, there were Emily and some eight or ten young ladies, who had all come down to the wedding, which was to take place next day, and who were in as happy and important a state as young ladies usually are, on such momentous occasions; and they were, one and all, startling the fields and lanes, far and wide, with their frolic and laughter.

The ceremony of introduction, under such circumstances, was very soon performed, or we should rather say that the introduction was soon over, without any ceremony at all. In two minutes thereafter, Mr. Pickwick was joking with the young ladies who wouldn't come over the stile while he looked—or who, having pretty feet and unexceptionable ankles, preferred standing on the top-rail for five minutes or so, declaring that they were too frightened to move—with as much ease and absence of reserve or constraint, as if he had known them for life. It is worthy of remark, too, that Mr. Snodgrass offered Emily far more assistance than the absolute terrors of the stile (although it was full three feet high, and had only a couple of stepping-stones) would seem to require; while one black-eyed young lady in a very nice little pair of boots with fur round the top, was observed to scream very loudly, when Mr. Winkle offered to help her over.

All this was very snug and pleasant. And when the difficulties of the stile were at last surmounted, and they once more entered on the open field, old Wardle informed Mr. Pickwick how they had all been down in a body to inspect the furniture and fittings-up of the house, which the young couple were to tenant, after the Christmas holidays; at which communication Bella and Trundle both coloured up, as red as the fat boy after the tap-room fire; and the young lady with the black eyes and the fur round the boots, whispered something in Emily's ear, and then glanced archly at Mr. Snodgrass: to which Emily responded that she was a foolish girl, but turned very red, notwithstanding; and Mr. Snodgrass, who was as modest as all great geniuses usually are, felt the crimson rising to the crown of his head, and devoutly wished in the inmost recesses of his own heart

that the young lady aforesaid, with her black eyes, and her archness, and her boots with the fur round the top, were all comfortably deposited in the adjacent county.

But if they were social and happy outside the house, what was the warmth and cordiality of their reception when they reached the farm! The very servants grinned with pleasure at sight of Mr. Pickwick; and Emma bestowed a half-demure, half-impudent, and all pretty, look of recognition, on Mr. Tupman, which was enough to make the statue of Bonaparte in the passage, unfold his arms, and clasp her within them.

The old lady was seated in customary state in the front parlour, but she was rather cross, and, by consequence, most particularly deaf. She never went out herself, and like a great many other old ladies of the same stamp, she was apt to consider it an act of domestic treason, if anybody else took the liberty of doing what she couldn't. So, bless her old soul, she sat as upright as she could, in her great chair, and looked as fierce as might be—and that was benevolent after all.

"Mother," said Wardle, "Mr. Pickwick. You recollect him?"

"Never mind," replied the old lady with great dignity. "Don't trouble Mr. Pickwick about an old creetur like me. Nobody cares about me now, and it's very nat'ral they shouldn't." Here the old lady tossed her head, and smoothed down her lavender-coloured silk dress, with trembling hands.

"Come, come, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, "I can't let you cut an old friend in this way. I have come down expressly to have a long talk, and another rubber with you; and we'll show these boys and girls how to dance a minuet, before they're eight-and-forty hours older."

The old lady was rapidly giving way, but she did not like to do it all at once; so she only said, "Ah! I can't hear him!"

"Nonsense, mother," said Wardle. "Come, come, don't be cross, there's a good soul. Recollect Bella; come, you must keep her spirits up, poor girl."

The good old lady heard this, for her lip quivered as her son said it. But age has its little infirmities of temper, and she was not quite brought round yet. So, she smoothed down the lavender-coloured dress again, and turning to

Mr. Pickwick said, "Ah, Mr. Pickwick, young people was very different, when I was a girl."

"No doubt of that, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, "and that's the reason why I would make much of the few that have any traces of the old stock,"—and saying this, Mr. Pickwick gently pulled Bella towards him, and bestowing a kiss upon her forehead, bade her sit down on the little stool at her grandmother's feet. Whether the expression of her countenance, as it was raised towards the old lady's face, called up a thought of old times, or whether the old lady was touched by Mr. Pickwick's affectionate good nature, or whatever was the cause, she was fairly melted; so she threw herself on her grand-daughter's neck, and all the little ill-humour evaporated in a gush of silent tears.

A happy party they were, that night. Sedate and solemn were the score of rubbers in which Mr. Pickwick and the old lady played together; uproarious was the mirth of the round table. Long after the ladies had retired, did the hot elder wine, well qualified with brandy and spice, go round, and round, and round again; and sound was the sleep and pleasant were the dreams that followed. It is a remarkable fact that those of Mr. Snodgrass bore constant reference to Emily Wardle; and that the principal figure in Mr. Winkle's visions was a young lady with black eyes, an arch smile, and a pair of remarkably nice boots with fur round the tops.

Mr. Pickwick was awakened, early in the morning, by a hum of voices and a pattering of feet, sufficient to rouse even the fat boy from his heavy slumbers. He sat up in bed and listened. The female servants and female visitors were running constantly to and fro; and there were such multitudinous demands for hot water, such repeated outcries for needles and thread, and so many half-suppressed entreaties of "Oh, do come and tie me, there's a dear!" that Mr. Pickwick in his innocence began to imagine that something dreadful must have occurred: when he grew more awake, and remembered the wedding. The occasion being an important one he dressed himself with peculiar care, and descended to the breakfast room.

There were all the female servants in a brand new uniform of pink muslin gowns with white bows in their caps, running about the house in a state of excitement and agitation which it would be impossible to describe. The old lady was dressed out in a brocaded gown which had

not seen the light for twenty years, saving and excepting such truant rays as had stolen through the chinks in the box in which it had been lain by, during the whole time. Mr. Trundle was in high feather and spirits, but a little nervous withal. The hearty old landlord was trying to look very cheerful and unconcerned, but failing signally in the attempt. All the girls were in tears and white muslin, except a select two or three who were being honoured with a private view of the bride and bridesmaids, up stairs. All the Pickwickians were in most blooming array; and there was a terrific roaring on the grass in front of the house, occasioned by all the men, boys, and hobbledehoyes attached to the farm, each of whom had got a white bow in his button-hole, and all of whom were cheering with might and main: being incited thereto, and stimulated therein, by the precept and example of Mr. Samuel Weller, who had managed to become mighty popular already, and was as much at home as if he had been born on the land.

A wedding is a licensed subject to joke upon, but there really is no great joke in the matter after all;—we speak merely of the ceremony, and beg it to be distinctly understood that we indulge in no hidden sarcasm upon a married life. Mixed up with the pleasure and joy of the occasion, are the many regrets at quitting home, the tears of parting between parent and child, the consciousness of leaving the dearest and kindest friends of the happiest portion of human life, to encounter its cares and troubles with others still untried and little known: natural feelings which we would not render this chapter mournful by describing, and which we should be still more unwilling to be supposed to ridicule.

Let us briefly say, then, that the ceremony was performed by the old clergyman, in the parish church of Dingley Dell, and that Mr. Pickwick's name is attached to the register, still preserved in the vestry thereof; that the young lady with the black eyes signed her name in a very unsteady and tremulous manner; that Emily's signature, as the other bridesmaid, is nearly illegible; that it all went off in very admirable style; that the young ladies generally thought it far less shocking than they had expected; and that although the owner of the black eyes and the arch smile informed Mr. Winkle that she was sure she could never submit to anything so dreadful, we have the very best reasons for

thinking she was mistaken. To all this, we may add, that Mr. Pickwick was the first who saluted the bride, and that in so doing, he threw over her neck a rich gold watch and chain, which no mortal eyes but the jeweller's had ever beheld before. Then, the old church bell rang as gaily as it could, and they all returned to breakfast.

"Vere does the mince pies go, young opium eater?" said Mr. Weller to the fat boy, as he assisted in laying out such articles of consumption as had not been duly arranged on the previous night.

The fat boy pointed to the destination of the pies.

"Wery good," said Sam, "stick a bit o' Christmas in 'em. T'other dish opposite. There; now we look compact and comfortable, as the father said ven he cut his little boy's head off, to cure him o' squintin'."

As Mr. Weller made the comparison, he fell back a step or two, to give full effect to it, and surveyed the preparations with the utmost satisfaction.

"Wardle," said Mr. Pickwick, almost as soon as they were all seated, "a glass of wine, in honour of this happy occasion!"

"I shall be delighted, my boy," said Mr. Wardle. "Joe—damn that boy, he's gone to sleep."

"No, I ain't, sir," replied the fat boy, starting up from a remote corner, where, like the patron saint of fat boys—the immortal Horner—he had been devouring a Christmas pie: though not with the coolness and deliberation which characterised that young gentleman's proceedings.

"Fill Mr. Pickwick's glass."

"Yes, sir."

The fat boy filled Mr. Pickwick's glass, and then retired behind his master's chair, from whence he watched the play of the knives and forks, and the progress of the choice morsels from the dishes to the mouths of the company, with a kind of dark and gloomy joy that was most impressive.

"God bless you, old fellow!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Same to you, my boy," replied Wardle; and they pledged each other, heartily.

"Mrs. Wardle," said Mr. Pickwick, "we old folks must have a glass of wine together, in honour of this joyful event."

The old lady was in a state of great grandeur just then,

for she was sitting at the top of the table in the brocaded gown, with her newly-married grand-daughter on one side and Mr. Pickwick on the other, to do the carving. Mr. Pickwick had not spoken in a very loud tone, but she understood him at once, and drank off a full glass of wine to his long life and happiness; after which the worthy old soul launched forth into a minute and particular account of her own wedding, with a dissertation on the fashion of wearing high-heeled shoes, and some particulars concerning the life and adventures of the beautiful Lady Tollinglower, deceased: at all of which the old lady herself laughed very heartily indeed, and so did the young ladies too, for they were wondering among themselves what on earth grandma was talking about. When they laughed, the old lady laughed ten times more heartily, and said that these always had been considered capital stories: which caused them all to laugh again, and put the old lady into the very best of humours. Then, the cake was cut, and passed through the ring; the young ladies saved pieces to put under their pillows to dream of their future husbands on; and a great deal of blushing and merriment was thereby occasioned.

"Mr. Miller," said Mr. Pickwick to his old acquaintance the hard-headed gentleman, "a glass of wine?"

"With great satisfaction, Mr. Pickwick," replied the hard-headed gentleman, solemnly.

"You'll take me in?" said the benevolent old clergyman.

"And me," interposed his wife.

"And me, and me," said a couple of poor relations at the bottom of the table, who had eaten and drank very heartily, and laughed at everything.

Mr. Pickwick expressed his heartfelt delight at every additional suggestion; and his eyes beamed with hilarity and cheerfulness.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Pickwick, suddenly rising.

"Hear, hear! Hear, hear! Hear, hear!" cried Mr. Weller, in the excitement of his feelings.

"Call in all the servants," cried old Wardle, interposing to prevent the public rebuke which Mr. Weller would otherwise most indubitably have received from his master. "Give them a glass of wine each, to drink the toast in. Now, Pickwick."

Amidst the silence of the company, the whispering of the

women servants, and the awkward embarrassment of the men, Mr. Pickwick proceeded.

"Ladies and gentlemen—no, I won't say ladies and gentlemen, I'll call you my friends, my dear friends, if the ladies will allow me to take so great a liberty"—

Here Mr. Pickwick was interrupted by immense applause from the ladies, echoed by the gentlemen, during which the owner of the eyes was distinctly heard to state that she could kiss that dear Mr. Pickwick. Whereupon Mr. Winkle gallantly inquired if it couldn't be done by deputy: to which the young lady with the black eyes replied, "Go away"—and accompanied the request with a look which said as plainly as a look could do—"if you can."

"My dear friends," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "I am going to propose the health of the bride and bridegroom—God bless 'em (cheers and tears). My young friend, Trundle, I believe to be a very excellent and manly fellow; and his wife I know to be a very amiable and lovely girl, well qualified to transfer to another sphere of action the happiness which for twenty years she has diffused around her, in her father's house. (Here, the fat boy burst forth into stentorian blubberings, and was led forth by the coat collar, by Mr. Weller.) I wish," added Mr. Pickwick, "I wish I was young enough to be her sister's husband (cheers), but, failing that, I am happy to be old enough to be her father; for, being so, I shall not be suspected of any latent designs when I say, that I admire, esteem, and love them both (cheers and sobs). The bride's father, our good friend there, is a noble person, and I am proud to know him (great uproar). He is a kind, excellent, independent-spirited, fine-hearted, hospitable, liberal man (enthusiastic shouts from the poor relations, at all the adjectives; and especially at the two last). That his daughter may enjoy all the happiness, even he can desire; and that he may derive from the contemplation of her felicity all the gratification of heart and peace of mind which he so well deserves, is, I am persuaded, our united wish. So, let us drink their healths, and wish them prolonged life, and every blessing!"

Mr. Pickwick concluded amidst a whirlwind of applause; and once more were the lungs of the supernumeraries, under Mr. Weller's command, brought into active and efficient operation. Mr. Wardle proposed Mr. Pickwick; Mr. Pickwick proposed the old lady. Mr. Snodgrass proposed

Mr. Wardle ; Mr. Wardle proposed Mr. Snodgrass. One of the poor relations proposed Mr. Tupman, and the other poor relation proposed Mr. Winkle ; all was happiness and festivity, until the mysterious disappearance of both the poor relations beneath the table. warned the party that it was time to adjourn.

At dinner they met again, after a five-and-twenty mile walk, undertaken by the males at Wardle's recommendation, to get rid of the effects of the wine at breakfast. The poor relations had kept in bed all day, with the view of attaining the same happy consummation, but, as they had been unsuccessful, they stopped there. Mr. Weller kept the domestics in a state of perpetual hilarity ; and the fat boy divided his time into small alternate allotments of eating and sleeping.

The dinner was as hearty an affair as the breakfast, and was quite as noisy, without the tears. Then came the dessert and some more toasts. Then came the tea and coffee ; and then, the ball.

The best sitting room at Manor Farm was a good, long, dark-panelled room with a high chimney-piece, and a capacious chimney, up which you could have driven one of the new patent cabs, wheels and all. At the upper end of the room, seated in a shady bower of holly and evergreens, were the two best fiddlers, and the only harp, in all Muggleton. In all sorts of recesses, and on all kinds of brackets, stood massive old silver candlesticks with four branches each. The carpet was up, the candles burnt bright, the fire blazed and crackled on the hearth, and merry voices and light-hearted laughter rang through the room. If any of the old English yeomen had turned into fairies when they died, it was just the place in which they would have held their revels.

If anything could have added to the interest of this agreeable scene, it would have been the remarkable fact of Mr. Pickwick's appearing without his gaiters, for the first time within the memory of his oldest friends.

"You mean to dance?" said Wardle.

"Of course I do," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Don't you see I am dressed for the purpose?" Mr. Pickwick called attention to his speckled silk stockings, and smartly-tied pumps.

"You in silk stockings!" exclaimed Mr. Tupman jocosely.

"And why not, sir—why not?" said Mr. Pickwick, turning warmly upon him.

"Oh, of course there is no reason why you shouldn't wear them," responded Mr. Tupman.

"I imagine not, sir, I imagine not," said Mr. Pickwick in a very peremptory tone.

Mr. Tupman had contemplated a laugh, but he found it was a serious matter; so he looked grave, and said they were a pretty pattern.

"I hope they are," said Mr. Pickwick fixing his eyes upon his friend. "You see nothing extraordinary in the stockings, as stockings, I trust, sir?"

"Certainly not. Oh, certainly not," replied Mr. Tupman. He walked away; and Mr. Pickwick's countenance resumed its customary benign expression.

"We are all ready, I believe," said Mr. Pickwick, who was stationed with the old lady at the top of the dance, and had already made four false starts, in his excessive anxiety to commence.

"Then begin at once," said Wardle. "Now!"

Up struck the two fiddles and the one harp, and off went Mr. Pickwick into hands across, when there was a general clapping of hands, and a cry of "Stop, stop!"

"What's the matter!" said Mr. Pickwick, who was only brought to, by the fiddles and harp desisting, and could have been stopped by no other earthly power, if the house had been on fire.

"Where's Arabella Allen?" cried a dozen voices.

"And Winkle?" added Mr. Tupman.

"Here we are!" exclaimed that gentleman, emerging with his pretty companion from the corner; as he did so, it would have been hard to tell which was the redder in the face, he or the young lady with the black eyes.

"What an extraordinary thing it is, Winkle," said Mr. Pickwick, rather pettishly, "that you couldn't have taken your place before."

"Not at all extraordinary," said Mr. Winkle.

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, with a very expressive smile, as his eyes rested on Arabella, "well, I don't know that it *was* extraordinary, either, after all."

However, there was no time to think more about the matter, for the fiddles and harp began in real earnest. Away went Mr. Pickwick—hands across—down the middle

to the very end of the room, and half-way up the chimney. back again to the door—poussette everywhere—loud stamp on the ground—ready for the next couple—off again—all the figure over once more—another stamp to beat out the time—next couple, and the next, and the next again—never was such going! At last, after they had reached the bottom of the dance, and full fourteen couple after the old lady had retired in an exhausted state and the clergyman's wife had been substituted in her stead, did that gentleman, when there was no demand whatever on his exertions, keep perpetually dancing in his place, to keep time to the music: smiling on his partner all the while with a blandness of demeanour which baffles all description.

Long before Mr. Pickwick was weary of dancing, the newly-married couple had retired from the scene. There was a glorious supper down-stairs, notwithstanding, and a good long sitting after it; and when Mr. Pickwick awoke, late the next morning, he had a confused recollection of having, severally and confidentially, invited somewhere about five-and-forty people to dine with him at the George and Vulture, the very first time they came to London; which Mr. Pickwick rightly considered a pretty certain indication of his having taken something besides exercise, on the previous night.

"And so your family has games in the kitchen to-night, my dear, has they?" inquired Sam of Emma.

"Yes, Mr. Weller," replied Emma; "we always have on Christmas eve. Master wouldn't neglect to keep it up on any account."

"Your master's a very pretty notion of keepin' anythin' up, my dear," said Mr. Weller; "I never see such a sensible sort of man as he is, or such a reg'lar gen'l'm'n."

"Oh, that he is!" said the fat boy, joining in the conversation; "don't he breed nice pork!" The fat youth gave a semi-cannibalic leer at Mr. Weller, as he thought of the roast legs and gravy.

"Oh, you've woke up, at last, have you?" said Sam.

The fat boy nodded.

"I'll tell you what it is, young bona constructor," said Mr. Weller, impressively; "if you don't sleep a little less, and exercise a little more, wen you comes to be a man you'll lay yourself open to the same sort of personal inconvenience as was inflicted on the old gen'l'm'n as wore the pigtail."

"What did they do to him?" inquired the fat boy, in a faltering voice.

"I'm a-goin' to tell you," replied Mr. Weller; "he was one o' the largest patterns as was ever turned out—reg'lar fat man, as hadn't caught a glimpse of his own shoes for five-and-forty-year."

"Lor!" exclaimed Emma.

"No, that he hadn't, my dear," said Mr. Weller; "and if you'd put an exact model of his own legs on the dinin' table afore him, he wouldn't ha' known 'em. Well, he always walks to his office with a verry handsome gold watch-chain hanging out, about a foot and a quarter, and a gold watch in his fob pocket as was worth—I'm afraid to say how much, but as much as a watch can be—a large, heavy, round manafacter, as stout for a watch, as he was for a man, and with a big face in proportion. 'You'd better not carry that 'ere watch,' says the old gen'l'm'n's friends, 'you'll be robbed on it,' says they. 'Shall I?' says he. 'Yes, you will,' says they. 'Vell,' says he, 'I should like to see the thief as could get this here watch out, for I'm blest if I ever can, it's such a tight fit,' says he; 'and venever I wants to know what's o'clock, I'm obliged to stare into the bakers' shops,' he says. Well, then he laughs as hearty as if he was a goin' to pieces, and out he walks agin' vith his powdered head and pigtail, and rolls down the Strand vith the chain hangin' out furdur than ever, and the great round watch almost bustin' through his grey kersey smalls. There warn't a pickpocket in all London as didn't take a pull at that chain, but the chain 'ud never break, and the watch 'ud never come out, so they soon got tired o' dragging such a heavy old gen'l'm'n along the pavement, and he'd go home and laugh till the pigtail vibrated like the penderlum of a Dutch clock. At last, one day the old gen'l'm'n was a rollin' along, and he sees a pickpocket as he know'd by sight, a-comin' up, arm in arm vith a little boy vith a verry large head. 'Here's a game,' says the old gen'l'm'n to himself, 'they're a-goin' to have another try, but it won't do!' So he begins a-chucklin' verry hearty, wen, all of a sudden, the little boy leaves hold of the pickpocket's arm, and rushes headforemost straight into the old gen'l'm'n's stomach, and for a moment doubles him right up vith the pain. 'Murder!' says the old gen'l'm'n. 'All right, sir,' says the pickpocket, a wisperin' in his ear. And wen he come straight agin, the watch and chain was gone, and what's



CHRISTMAS EVE AT MR. WARDLE'S

worse than that, the old gen't'm'n's digestion was all wrong ever arterwards, to the wery last day of his life ; so just you look about you, young feller, and take care you don't get too fat."

As Mr. Weller concluded this moral tale, with which the fat boy appeared much affected, they all three repaired to the large kitchen, in which the family were by this time assembled, according to annual custom on Christmas eve, observed by old Wardle's forefathers from time immemorial.

From the centre of the ceiling of this kitchen, old Wardle had just suspended, with his own hands, a huge branch of mistletoe, and this same branch of mistletoe instantaneously gave rise to a scene of general and delightful struggling and confusion ; in the midst of which, Mr. Pickwick, with a gallantry that would have done honour to a descendant of Lady Tollinglower herself, took the old lady by the hand, led her beneath the mystic branch, and saluted her in all courtesy and decorum. The old lady submitted to this piece of practical politeness with all the dignity which befitted so important and serious a solemnity, but the younger ladies, not being so thoroughly imbued with a superstitious veneration for the custom : or imagining that the value of a salute is very much enhanced if it cost a little trouble to obtain it : screamed and struggled, and ran into corners, and threatened and remonstrated, and did everything but leave the room, until some of the less adventurous gentlemen were on the point of desisting, when they all at once found it useless to resist any longer, and submitted to be kissed with a good grace. Mr. Winkle kissed the young lady with the black eyes, and Mr. Snodgrass kissed Emily, and Mr. Weller, not being particular about the form of being under the mistletoe, kissed Emma and the other female servants, just as he caught them. As to the poor relations, they kissed everybody, not even excepting the plainer portions of the young-lady visitors, who, in their excessive confusion, ran right under the mistletoe, as soon as it was hung up, without knowing it ! Wardle stood with his back to the fire, surveying the whole scene, with the utmost satisfaction ; and the fat boy took the opportunity of appropriating to his own use, and summarily devouring, a particularly fine mince-pie, that had been carefully put by for somebody else.

Now, the screaming had subsided, and faces were in a glow, and curls in a tangle, and Mr. Pickwick, after kissing the old

lady as before mentioned, was standing under the mistletoe, looking with a very pleased countenance on all that was passing around him, when the young lady with the black eyes, after a little whispering with the other young ladies, made a sudden dart forward, and, putting her arm round Mr. Pickwick's neck, saluted him affectionately on the left cheek; and before Mr. Pickwick distinctly knew what was the matter, he was surrounded by the whole body, and kissed by every one of them.

It was a pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick in the centre of the group, now pulled this way, and then that, and first kissed on the chin, and then on the nose, and then on the spectacles: and to hear the peals of laughter which were raised on every side; but it was a still more pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick, blinded shortly afterwards with a silk handkerchief, falling up against the wall, and scrambling into corners, and going through all the mysteries of blind-man's buff, with the utmost relish for the game, until at last he caught one of the poor relations, and then had to evade the blind-man himself, which he did with a nimbleness and agility that elicited the admiration and applause of all beholders. The poor relations caught the people who they thought would like it, and, when the game flagged, got caught themselves. When they were all tired of blind-man's buff, there was a great game at snap-dragon, and when fingers enough were burned with that, and all the raisins were gone, they sat down by the huge fire of blazing logs to a substantial supper, and a mighty bowl of wassail, something smaller than an ordinary wash-house copper, in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look, and a jolly sound, that were perfectly irresistible.

"This," said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him, "this is, indeed, comfort."

"Our invariable custom," replied Mr. Wardle. "Everybody sits down with us on Christmas eve, as you see them now—servants and all; and here we wait, until the clock strikes twelve, to usher Christmas in, and beguile the time with forfeits and old stories. Trundle, my boy, rake up the fire."

Up flew the bright sparks in myriads as the logs were stirred. The deep red blaze sent forth a rich glow, that penetrated into the furthest corner of the room, and cast its cheerful tint on every face.

"Come," said Wardle, "a song—a Christmas song! I'll give you one, in default of a better."

"Bravo!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fill up," cried Wardle. "It will be two hours, good, before you see the bottom of the bowl through the deep rich colour of the wassail; fill up all round, and now for the song."

Thus saying, the merry old gentleman, in a good, round, sturdy voice, commenced without more ado:

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

I CARE not for Spring; or his fickle wing
Let the blossoms and bud be borne;
He woos them amain with his treacherous rain,
And he scatters them ere the morn.
An inconstant elf, he knows not himself,
Nor his own changing mind an hour,
He'll smile in your face, and, with wry grimace,
He'll wither your youngest flower.

Let the Summer sun to his bright home run,
He shall never be sought by me;
When he's dimmed by a cloud I can laugh aloud,
And care not how sulky he be!
For his darling child is the madness wild
That sports in fierce fever's train;
And when love is too strong, it don't last long,
As many have found to their pain.

A mild harvest night, by the tranquil light
Of the modest and gentle moon,
Has a far sweeter sheen, for me, I ween,
Than the broad and unblushing noon
But every leaf awakens my grief,
As it lieth beneath the tree;
So let Autumn air be never so fair,
It by no means agrees with me.

But my song I trol out, for CHRISTMAS stout,
The hearty, the true, and the bold;
A bumper I drain, and with might and main
Give three cheers for this Christmas old!
We'll usher him in with a merry din
That shall gladden his joyous heart,
And we'll keep him up, while there's bite or sup,
And in fellowship good, we'll part

In his fine honest pride, he scorns to hide,
One jot of his hard-weather scars;
They're no disgrace, for there's much the same trace
On the cheeks of our bravest tars.
Then again I sing 'till the roof doth ring,
And it echoes from wall to wall—
To the stout old wight, fair welcome to-night,
As the King of the Seasons all!

This song was tumultuously applauded—for friends and dependents make a capital audience—and the poor relations, especially, were in perfect ecstasies of rapture. Again was the fire replenished, and again went the wassail round.

"How it snows!" said one of the men, in a low tone.

"Snows, does it?" said Wardle.

Rough, cold night, sir," replied the man; "and there's a wind got up, that drifts it across the fields, in a thick white cloud."

"What does Jem say?" inquired the old lady. "There ain't anything the matter, is there?"

"No, no, mother," replied Wardle; "he says there's a snow-drift, and a wind that's piercing cold. I should know that, by the way it rumbles in the chimney."

"Ah!" said the old lady, "there was just such a wind, and just such a fall of snow, a good many years back, I recollect—just five years before your poor father died. It was a Christmas eve, too; and I remember that on that very night he told us the story about the goblins that carried away old Gabriel Grub."

"The story about what?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Wardle. "About an old sexton, that the good people down here suppose to have been carried away by goblins."

"Suppose!" ejaculated the old lady. "Is there any body hardy enough to disbelieve it? Suppose! Haven't you heard ever since you were a child, that he *was* carried away by the goblins, and don't you know he was?"

"Very well, mother, he was, if you like," said Wardle, laughing. "He *was* carried away by goblins, Pickwick; and there's an end of the matter."

"No, no," said Mr. Pickwick, "not an end of it, I assure you; for I must hear how, and why, and all about it."

Wardle smiled, as every head was bent forward to hear; and filling out the wassail with no stinted hand, nodded a health to Mr. Pickwick, and began as follows:

But bless our editorial heart, what a long chapter we have been betrayed into! We had quite forgotten all such petty restrictions as chapters, we solemnly declare. So here goes, to give the goblin a fair start in a new one! A clear stage and no favour for the goblins, ladies and gentlemen, if you please.

CHAPTER XXX

HOW THE PICKWICKIANS MADE AND CULTIVATED THE
ACQUAINTANCE OF A COUPLE OF NICE YOUNG MEN
BELONGING TO ONE OF THE LIBERAL PROFESSIONS;
HOW THEY DISPORTED THEMSELVES ON THE ICE;
AND HOW THEIR FIRST VISIT CAME TO A CONCLUSION

"WELL, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick as that favoured servitor entered his bed-chamber with his warm water, on the morning of Christmas Day, "Still frosty?"

"Water in the wash-hand basin's a mask o' ice, sir," responded Sam.

"Severe weather, Sam," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"Fine time for them as is well wropped up, as the Polar Bear said to himself, ven he was practising his skating," replied Mr. Weller.

"I shall be down in a quarter of an hour, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, untying his nightcap.

"Wery good, sir," replied Sam. "There's a couple o' Sawbones down stairs."

"A couple of what!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, sitting up in bed.

"A couple o' Sawbones," said Sam.

"What's a Sawbones?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, not quite certain whether it was a live animal, or something to eat.

"What! Don't you know what a Sawbones is, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller. "I thought everybody know'd as a Sawbones was a Surgeon."

"Oh, a Surgeon, eh?" said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"Just that, sir," replied Sam. "These here ones as is below, though, ain't reg'lar thorough-bred Sawbones; they're only in trainin'."

"In other words they're Medical Students, I suppose?" said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam Weller nodded assent.

"I am glad of it," said Mr. Pickwick, casting his nightcap energetically on the counterpane, "They are fine fellows; very fine fellows; with judgments matured by observation and reflection; tastes refined by reading and study. I am very glad of it."

"They're a smokin' cigars by the kitchen fire," said Sam.

'Ah!' observed Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his hands, "overflowing with kindly feelings and animal spirits. Just what I like to see."

"And one on 'em," said Sam, not noticing his master's interruption, "one on 'em's got his legs on the table, and is a drinkin' brandy neat, vile the t'other one—him in the barnacles—has got a barrel o' oysters atween his knees, wick he's a openin' like steam, and as fast as he eats 'em, he takes a aim with the shells at young dropsy, who's a sittin' down fast asleep, in the chimbley corner."

"Eccentricities of genius, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "You may retire."

Sam did retire accordingly; Mr. Pickwick, at the expiration of the quarter of an hour, went down to breakfast.

"Here he is at last!" said old Mr. Wardle. "Pickwick, this is Miss Allen's brother, Mr. Benjamin Allen. Ben we call him, and so may you if you like. This gentleman is his very particular friend, Mr. —"

"Mr. Bob Sawyer," interposed Mr. Benjamin Allen; whereupon Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen laughed in concert.

Mr. Pickwick bowed to Bob Sawyer, and Bob Sawyer bowed to Mr. Pickwick; Bob and his very particular friend then applied themselves most assiduously to the eatables before them; and Mr. Pickwick had an opportunity of glancing at them both.

Mr. Benjamin Allen was a coarse, stout, thick-set young man, with black hair cut rather short, and a white face cut rather long. He was embellished with spectacles, and wore a white neckerchief. Below his single-breasted black surtout, which was buttoned up to his chin, appeared the usual number of pepper-and-salt coloured legs, terminating in a pair of imperfectly polished boots. Although his coat was short in the sleeves, it disclosed no vestige of a linen wristband; and although there was quite enough of his face to admit of the encroachment of a shirt collar, it was not graced by the smallest approach to that appendage. He presented, alto-

gether, rather a mildewy appearance, and emitted a fragrant odour of full-flavoured Cubas.

Mr. Bob Sawyer, who was habited in a coarse blue coat, which, without being either a great-coat or a surtout, partook of the nature and qualities of both, had about him that sort of slovenly smartness, and swaggering gait, which is peculiar to young gentlemen who smoke in the streets by day, shout and scream in the same by night, call waiters by their Christian names, and do various other acts and deeds of an equally facetious description. He wore a pair of plaid trousers, and a large rough double-breasted waistcoat; out of doors, he carried a thick stick with a big top. He eschewed gloves, and looked, upon the whole, something like a dissipated Robinson Crusoe.

Such were the two worthies to whom Mr. Pickwick was introduced, as he took his seat at the breakfast table on Christmas morning.

"Splendid morning, gentlemen," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Bob Sawyer slightly nodded his assent to the proposition, and asked Mr. Benjamin Allen for the mustard.

"Have you come far this morning, gentlemen?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Blue Lion at Muggleton," briefly responded Mr. Allen.

"You should have joined us last night," said Mr. Pickwick.

"So we should," replied Bob Sawyer, "but the brandy was too good to leave in a hurry: wasn't it, Ben?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Benjamin Allen; "and the cigars were not bad, or the pork chops either: were they, Bob?"

"Decidedly not," said Bob. The particular friends resumed their attack upon the breakfast, more freely than before, as if the recollection of last night's supper had imparted a new relish to the meal.

"Peg away, Bob," said Mr. Allen to his companion, encouragingly.

"So I do," replied Bob Sawyer. And so, to do him justice, he did.

"Nothing like dissecting, to give one an appetite," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, looking round the table.

Mr. Pickwick slightly shuddered.

"By the bye, Bob," said Mr. Allen, "have you finished that leg yet?"

"Nearly," replied Sawyer, helping himself to half a fowl as he spoke. "It's a very muscular one for a child's."

"Is it?" inquired Mr. Allen, carelessly.

"Very," said Bob Sawyer, with his mouth full.

"I've put my name down for an arm, at our place," said Mr. Allen. "We're clubbing for a subject, and the list is nearly full, only we can't get hold of any fellow that wants a head. I wish you'd take it."

"No," replied Bob Sawyer; "can't afford expensive luxuries."

"Nonsense!" said Allen.

"Can't indeed," rejoined Bob Sawyer. "I wouldn't mind a brain, but I couldn't stand a whole head."

"Hush, hush, gentlemen, pray," said Mr. Pickwick. "I hear the ladies."

As Mr. Pickwick spoke, the ladies, gallantly escorted by Messrs. Snodgrass, Winkle, and Tupman, returned from an early walk.

"Why, Ben!" said Arabella, in a tone which expressed more surprise than pleasure at the sight of her brother.

"Come to take you home to-morrow," replied Benjamin.

Mr. Winkle turned pale.

"Don't you see Bob Sawyer, Arabella?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, somewhat reproachfully. Arabella gracefully held out her hand, in acknowledgement of Bob Sawyer's presence. A thrill of hatred struck to Mr. Winkle's heart, as Bob Sawyer inflicted on the proffered hand a perceptible squeeze.

"Ben, dear!" said Arabella, blushing; "have—have—you been introduced to Mr. Winkle?"

"I have not been, but I shall be very happy to be, Arabella," replied her brother gravely. Here Mr. Allen bowed grimly to Mr. Winkle, while Mr. Winkle and Mr. Bob Sawyer glanced mutual distrust out of the corners of their eyes.

The arrival of the two new visitors, and the consequent check upon Mr. Winkle and the young lady with the fur round her boots, would in all probability have proved a very unpleasant interruption to the hilarity of the party, had not the cheerfulness of Mr. Pickwick, and the good humour of the host, been exerted to the very utmost for the common weal. Mr. Winkle gradually insinuated himself into the good graces of Mr. Benjamin Allen, and even joined in a friendly conversation with Mr. Bob Sawyer; who, enlivened with the brandy, and the breakfast, and the talking,

gradually ripened into a state of extreme facetiousness, and related with much glee an agreeable anecdote, about the removal of a tumour on some gentleman's head: which he illustrated by means of an oyster-knife and a half-quartern loaf, to the great edification of the assembled company. Then, the whole train went to church, where Mr. Benjamin Allen fell fast asleep: while Mr. Bob Sawyer abstracted his thoughts from worldly matters, by the ingenious process of carving his name on the seat of the pew, in corpulent letters of four inches long.

"Now," said Wardle, after a substantial lunch, with the agreeable items of strong beer and cherry-brandy, had been done ample justice to; "what say you to an hour on the ice? We shall have plenty of time."

"Capital!" said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"Prime!" ejaculated Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"You skate, of course, Winkle?" said Wardle.

"Ye-yes; oh, yes," replied Mr. Winkle. "I—I—am *rather* out of practice."

"Oh, *do* skate, Mr. Winkle," said Arabella. "I like to see it so much."

"Oh, it is so graceful," said another young lady.

A third young lady said it was elegant, and a fourth expressed her opinion that it was "swan-like."

"I should be very happy, I'm sure," said Mr. Winkle, reddening; "but I have no skates."

This objection was at once overruled. Trundle had a couple of pair, and the fat boy announced that there were half-a-dozen more down stairs: whereat Mr. Winkle expressed exquisite delight, and looked exquisitely uncomfortable.

Old Wardle led the way to a pretty large sheet of ice; and the fat boy and Mr. Weller, having shovelled and swept away the snow which had fallen on it during the night, Mr. Bob Sawyer adjusted his skates with a dexterity which to Mr. Winkle was perfectly marvellous, and described circles with his left leg, and cut figures of eight, and inscribed upon the ice, without once stopping for breath, a great many other pleasant and astonishing devices, to the excessive satisfaction of Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, and the ladies: which reached a pitch of positive enthusiasm, when old Wardle and Benjamin Allen, assisted by the aforesaid Bob Sawyer, performed some mystic evolutions, which they called a reel.

All this time, Mr. Winkle, with his face and hands blue with the cold, had been forcing a gimlet into the soles of his feet, and putting his skates on, with the points behind, and getting the straps into a very complicated and entangled state, with the assistance of Mr. Snodgrass, who knew rather less about skates than a Hindoo. At length, however, with the assistance of Mr. Weller, the unfortunate skates were firmly screwed and buckled on, and Mr. Winkle was raised to his feet.

‘Now, then, sir,’ said Sam, in an encouraging tone; ‘off with you, and show ’em how to do it.’

‘Stop, Sam, stop!’ said Mr. Winkle, trembling violently, and clutching hold of Sam’s arms with the grasp of a drowning man. ‘How slippery it is, Sam!’

‘Not an uncommon thing upon ice, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller. ‘Hold up, sir!’

This last observation of Mr. Weller’s bore reference to a demonstration Mr. Winkle made at the instant, of a frantic desire to throw his feet in the air, and dash the back of his head on the ice.

‘These—these—are very awkward skates; ain’t they, Sam?’ inquired Mr. Winkle, staggering.

‘I’m afeerd there’s a orkard gen’l’m’n in ’em, sir,’ replied Sam.

‘Now, Winkle,’ cried Mr. Pickwick, quite unconscious that there was anything the matter. ‘Come; the ladies are all anxiety.’

‘Yes, yes,’ replied Mr. Winkle, with a ghastly smile. ‘I’m coming.’

‘Just a goin’ to begin,’ said Sam, endeavouring to disengage himself. ‘Now, sir, start off!’

‘Stop an instant, Sam,’ gasped Mr. Winkle, clinging most affectionately to Mr. Weller. ‘I find I’ve got a couple of coats at home that I don’t want, Sam. You may have them, Sam.’

‘Thank’ee sir,’ replied Mr. Weller.

‘Never mind touching your hat, Sam,’ said Mr. Winkle, hastily. ‘You needn’t take your hand away to do that. I meant to have given you five shillings this morning for a Christmas-box, Sam. I’ll give it you this afternoon, Sam.’

‘You’re verry good, sir,’ replied Mr. Weller.

‘Just hold me at first, Sam; will you?’ said Mr. Winkle.

"There—that's right. I shall soon get in the way of it, Sam. Not too fast, Sam; not too fast."

Mr. Winkle stooping forward, with his body half doubled up, was being assisted over the ice by Mr. Weller, in a very singular and un-swan-like manner, when Mr. Pickwick most innocently shouted from the opposite bank :

"Sam!"

"Sir?"

"Here. I want you."

"Let go, sir," said Sam. "Don't you hear the governor a callin'? Let go, sir."

With a violent effort, Mr. Weller disengaged himself from the grasp of the agonised Pickwickian, and, in so doing, administered a considerable impetus to the unhappy Mr. Winkle. With an accuracy which no degree of dexterity or practice could have insured, that unfortunate gentleman bore swiftly down into the centre of the reel, at the very moment when Mr. Bob Sawyer was performing a flourish of unparalleled beauty. Mr. Winkle struck wildly against him, and with a loud crash they both fell heavily down. Mr. Pickwick ran to the spot. Bob Sawyer had risen to his feet, but Mr. Winkle was far too wise to do anything of the kind, in skates. He was seated on the ice, making spasmodic efforts to smile; but anguish was depicted on every lineament of his countenance.

"Are you hurt?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, with great anxiety.

"Not much," said Mr. Winkle, rubbing his back very hard.

"I wish you'd let me bleed you," said Mr. Benjamin, with great eagerness.

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Winkle hurriedly.

"I really think you had better," said Allen.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Winkle; "I'd rather not."

"What do *you* think, Mr. Pickwick?" inquired Bob Sawyer.

Mr. Pickwick was excited and indignant. He beckoned to Mr. Weller, and said in a stern voice, "Take his skates off."

"No; but really I had scarcely begun," remonstrated Mr. Winkle.

"Take his skates off," repeated Mr. Pickwick firmly.

The command was not to be resisted. Mr. Winkle allowed Sam to obey it in silence.

"Lift him up," said Mr. Pickwick. Sam assisted him to rise.

Mr. Pickwick retired a few paces apart from the bystanders; and, beckoning his friend to approach, fixed a searching look upon him, and uttered in a low, but distinct and emphatic tone, these remarkable words.

"You're a humbug, sir."

"A what?" said Mr. Winkle, starting.

"A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it. An impostor, sir."

With those words, Mr. Pickwick turned slowly on his heel, and rejoined his friends.

While Mr. Pickwick was delivering himself of the sentiment just recorded, Mr. Weller and the fat boy, having by their joint endeavours cut out a slide, were exercising themselves thereupon, in a very masterly and brilliant manner. Sam Weller, in particular, was displaying that beautiful feat of fancy-sliding which is currently denominated "knocking at the cobbler's door," and which is achieved by skimming over the ice on one foot, and occasionally giving a postman's knock upon it with the other. It was a good long slide, and there was something in the motion which Mr. Pickwick, who was very cold with standing still, could not help envying.

"It looks a nice warm exercise that, doesn't it?" he inquired of Wardle, when that gentleman was thoroughly out of breath, by reason of the indefatigable manner in which he had converted his legs into a pair of compasses, and drawn complicated problems on the ice.

"Ah, it does indeed," replied Wardle. "Do you slide?"

"I used to do so, on the gutters, when I was a boy," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Try it now," said Wardle.

"Oh do please, Mr. Pickwick!" cried all the ladies.

"I should be very happy to afford you any amusement," replied Mr. Pickwick, "but I haven't done such a thing these thirty years."

"Pooh! pooh! Nonsense!" said Wardle, dragging off his skates with the impetuosity which characterised all his proceedings. "Here; I'll keep you company; come along!" And away went the good tempered old fellow down the slide, with a rapidity which came very close upon Mr. Weller, and beat the fat boy all to nothing.



MR. PICKWICK SLIDES

Mr. Pickwick paused, considered, pulled off his gloves and put them in his hat: took two or three short runs, baulked himself as often, and at last took another run, and went slowly and gravely down the slide, with his feet about a yard and a quarter apart, amidst the gratified shouts of all the spectators.

"Keep the pot a bilin', sir!" said Sam; and down went Wardle again, and then Mr. Pickwick, and then Sam, and then Mr. Winkle, and then Mr. Bob Sawyer, and then the fat boy, and then Mr. Snodgrass, following closely upon each other's heels, and running after each other with as much eagerness as if all their future prospects in life depended on their expedition.

It was the most intensely interesting thing, to observe the manner in which Mr. Pickwick performed his share in the ceremony; to watch the torture of anxiety with which he viewed the person behind, gaining upon him at the imminent hazard of tripping him up; to see him gradually expend the painful force he had put on at first, and turn slowly round on the slide, with his face towards the point from which he had started; to contemplate the playful smile which mantled on his face when he had accomplished the distance, and the eagerness with which he turned round when he had done so, and ran after his predecessor: his black gaiters tripping pleasantly through the snow, and his eyes beaming cheerfulness and gladness through his spectacles. And when he was knocked down (which happened upon the average every third round), it was the most invigorating sight that can possibly be imagined, to behold him gather up his hat, gloves, and handkerchief, with a glowing countenance, and resume his station in the rank, with an ardour and enthusiasm that nothing could abate.

The sport was at its height, the sliding was at the quickest, the laughter was at the loudest, when a sharp smart crack was heard. There was a quick rush towards the bank, a wild scream from the ladies, and a shout from Mr. Tupman. A large mass of ice disappeared; the water bubbled up over it; Mr. Pickwick's hat, gloves, and handkerchief were floating on the surface; and this was all of Mr. Pickwick that anybody could see.

Dismay and anguish were depicted on every countenance, the males turned pale, and the females fainted. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle grasped each other by the hand, and

gazed at the spot where their leader had gone down, with frenzied eagerness: while Mr. Tupman, by way of rendering the promptest assistance, and at the same time conveying to any persons who might be within hearing, the clearest possible notion of the catastrophe, ran off across the country at his utmost speed, screaming "Fire!" with all his might.

It was at this moment, when old Wardle and Sam Weller were approaching the hole with cautious steps, and Mr. Benjamin Allen was holding a hurried consultation with Mr. Bob Sawyer, on the advisability of bleeding the company generally, as an improving little bit of professional practice—it was at this very moment, that a face, head, and shoulders, emerged from beneath the water, and disclosed the features and spectacles of Mr. Pickwick.

"Keep yourself up for an instant—for only one instant!" bawled Mr. Snodgrass.

"Yes, do; let me implore you—for my sake!" roared Mr. Winkle, deeply affected. The adjuration was rather unnecessary; the probability being, that if Mr. Pickwick had declined to keep himself up for anybody else's sake, it would have occurred to him that he might as well do so, for his own.

"Do you feel the bottom there, old fellow?" said Wardle.

"Yes, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick, wringing the water from his head and face, and gasping for breath. "I fell upon my back. I couldn't get on my feet at first."

The clay upon so much of Mr. Pickwick's coat as was yet visible, bore testimony to the accuracy of this statement; and as the fears of the spectators were still further relieved by the fat boy's suddenly recollecting that the water was nowhere more than five feet deep, prodigies of valour were performed to get him out. After a vast quantity of splashing, and cracking, and struggling, Mr. Pickwick was at length fairly extricated from his unpleasant position, and once more stood on dry land.

"Oh, he'll catch his death of cold," said Emily.

"Dear old thing!" said Arabella. "Let me wrap this shawl round you, Mr. Pickwick."

"Ah, that's the best thing you can do," said Wardle; "and when you've got it on, run home as fast as your legs can carry you, and jump into bed directly."

A dozen shawls were offered on the instant. Three or

four of the thickest having been selected, Mr. Pickwick was wrapped up, and started off, under the guidance of Mr. Weller: presenting the singular phenomenon of an elderly gentleman, dripping wet, and without a hat, with his arms bound down to his sides, skimming over the ground, without any clearly defined purpose, at the rate of six good English miles an hour.

But Mr. Pickwick cared not for appearances in such an extreme case, and urged on by Sam Weller, he kept at the very top of his speed until he reached the door of Manor Farm, where Mr. Tupman had arrived some five minutes before, and had frightened the old lady into palpitations of the heart by impressing her with the unalterable conviction that the kitchen chimney was on fire—a calamity which always presented itself in growing colours to the old lady's mind, when anybody about her evinced the smallest agitation.

Mr. Pickwick paused not an instant until he was snug in bed. Sam Weller lighted a blazing fire in the room, and took up his dinner; a bowl of punch was carried up afterwards, and a grand carouse held in honour of his safety. Old Wardle would not hear of his rising, so they made the bed the chair, and Mr. Pickwick presided. A second and a third bowl were ordered in; and when Mr. Pickwick awoke next morning, there was not a symptom of rheumatism about him: which proves, as Mr. Bob Sawyer very justly observed, that there is nothing like hot punch in such cases: and that if ever hot punch did fail to act as a preventive, it was merely because the patient fell into the vulgar error of not taking enough of it.

The jovial party broke up next morning. Breakings up are capital things in our school days, but in after life they are painful enough. Death, self-interest, and fortune's changes, are every day breaking up many a happy group, and scattering them far and wide; and the boys and girls never come back again. We do not mean to say that it was exactly the case in this particular instance; all we wish to inform the reader is, that the different members of the party dispersed to their several homes; that Mr. Pickwick and his friends once more took their seats on the top of the Muggleton coach; and that Arabella Allen repaired to her place of destination, wherever it might have been—we dare say Mr. Winkle knew, but we confess we don't—under the

care and guardianship of her brother Benjamin, and his most intimate and particular friend, Mr. Bob Sawyer.

Before they separated, however, that gentleman and Mr. Benjamin Allen drew Mr. Pickwick aside with an air of some mystery : and Mr. Bob Sawyer thrusting his forefinger between two of Mr. Pickwick's ribs, and thereby displaying his native drollery, and his knowledge of the anatomy of the human frame, at one and the same time, inquired :

"I say, old boy, where do you hang out ?

Mr. Pickwick replied that he was at present suspended at the George and Vulture.

"I wish you'd come and see me," said Bob Sawyer.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"There's my lodgings," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, producing a card. "Lant Street, Borough ; it's near Guy's, and handy for me, you know. Little distance after you've passed Saint George's Church—turns out of the High Street on the right hand side the way."

"I shall find it," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Come on Thursday fortnight, and bring the other chaps with you," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, "I'm going to have a few medical fellows that night."

Mr. Pickwick expressed the pleasure it would afford him to meet the medical fellows ; and after Mr. Bob Sawyer had informed him that he meant to be very cosy, and that his friend Ben was to be one of the party, they shook hands and separated.

We feel that in this place we lay ourself open to the inquiry whether Mr. Winkle was whispering, during this brief conversation, to Arabella Allen ; and if so, what he said ; and furthermore, whether Mr. Snodgrass was conversing apart with Emily Wardle ; and if so, what *he* said. To this, we reply, that whatever they might have said to the ladies, they said nothing at all to Mr. Pickwick or Mr. Tupman for eight-and-twenty miles, and that they sighed very often, refused ale and brandy, and looked gloomy. If our observant lady readers can deduce any satisfactory inferences from these facts, we beg them by all means to do so.

CHAPTER XXXIII

MR. WELLER THE ELDER DELIVERS SOME CRITICAL SENTIMENTS RESPECTING LITERARY COMPOSITION

THE morning of the thirteenth of February, which the readers of this authentic narrative know, as well as we do, to have been the day immediately preceding that which was appointed for the trial of Mrs. Bardell's action, was a busy time for Mr. Samuel Weller, who was perpetually engaged in travelling from the George and Vulture to Mr. Perker's chambers and back again, from and between the hours of nine o'clock in the morning and two in the afternoon, both inclusive. Not that there was anything whatever to be done. for the consultation had taken place, and the course of proceeding to be adopted, had been finally determined on ; but Mr. Pickwick being in a most extreme state of excitement, persevered in constantly sending small notes to his attorney, merely containing the inquiry, "Dear Perker. Is all going on well?" to which Mr. Perker invariably forwarded the reply, "Dear Pickwick. As well as possible;" the fact being, as we have already hinted, that there was nothing whatever to go on, either well or ill, until the sitting of the court on the following morning.

But people who go voluntarily to law, or are taken forcibly there, for the first time, may be allowed to labour under some temporary irritation and anxiety: and Sam, with a due allowance for the frailties of human nature, obeyed all his master's behests with that imperturbable good humour and unruffled composure which formed one of his most striking and amiable characteristics.

Sam had solaced himself with a most agreeable little dinner,

and was waiting at the bar for the glass of warm mixture in which Mr. Pickwick had requested him to drown the fatigues of his morning's walks, when a young boy of about three feet high, or thereabouts, in a hairy cap and fustian overalls, whose garb bespoke a laudable ambition to attain in time the elevation of an hostler, entered the passage of the George and Vulture, and looked first up the stairs, and then along the passage, and then into the bar, as if in search of somebody to whom he bore a commission; whereupon the barmaid, conceiving it not improbable that the said commission might be directed to the tea or table spoons of the establishment, accosted the boy with

"Now, young man, what do *you* want?"

"Is there anybody here, named Sam?" inquired the youth, in a loud voice of treble quality.

"What's the t'other name?" said Sam Weller, looking round.

"How should I know?" briskly replied the young gentleman below the hairy cap.

"You're a sharp boy, you are," said Mr. Weller; "only I wouldn't show that wery fine edge too much, if I was you, in case anybody took it off. What do you mean by comin' to a hot-el, and asking arter Sam, vith as much politeness as a vild Indian?"

"'Cos an old gen'l'm'n told me to," replied the boy.

"What old gen'l'm'n?" inquired Sam, with deep disdain.

"Him as drives a Ipswich coach, and uses our parlour," rejoined the boy. "He told me yesterday mornin' to come to the George and Wultur this arternoon, and ask for Sam."

"It's my father," my dear, said Mr. Weller, turning with an explanatory air to the young lady in the bar; "blessed if I think he hardly knows wot my other name is. Vell, young brockiley sprout, wot then?"

"Why, then," said the boy, "you was to come to him at six o'clock to our 'ouse, 'cos he wants to see you—Blue Boar, Leaden'all Markit. Shall I say you're comin'?"

"You *may* venture on that 'ere statement, sir," replied Sam. And thus empowered, the young gentleman walked away, awakening all the echoes in George Yard as he did so, with several chaste and extremely correct imitations of a drover's whistle, delivered in a tone of peculiar richness and volume.

Mr. Weller having obtained leave of absence from Mr. Pickwick, who, in his then state of excitement and worry was by no means displeased at being left alone, set forth, long before the appointed hour, and having plenty of time at his disposal, sauntered down as far as the Mansion House, where he paused and contemplated, with a face of great calmness and philosophy, the numerous cads and drivers of short stages who assemble near that famous place of resort, to the great terror and confusion of the old-lady population of these realms. Having loitered here, for half an hour or so, Mr. Weller turned, and began wending his way towards Leadenhall Market, through a variety of bye streets and courts. As he was sauntering away his spare time, and stopped to look at almost every object that met his gaze, it is by no means surprising that Mr. Weller should have paused before a small stationer's and print-seller's window; but without further explanation it does appear surprising that his eyes should have no sooner rested on certain pictures which were exposed for sale therein, than he gave a sudden start, smote his right leg with great vehemence, and exclaimed with energy, "If it hadn't been for this, I should ha' forgot all about it, till it was too late!"

The particular picture on which Sam Weller's eyes were fixed, as he said this, was a highly coloured representation of a couple of human hearts skewered together with an arrow, cooking before a cheerful fire, while a male and female cannibal in modern attire: the gentleman being clad in a blue coat and white trousers, and the lady in a deep red pelisse with a parasol of the same: were approaching the meal with hungry eyes, up a serpentine gravel path leading thereunto. A decidedly indelicate young gentleman, in a pair of wings and nothing else, was depicted as superintending the cooking; a representation of the spire of the church in Langham Place, London, appeared in the distance; and the whole formed a "valentine," of which, as a written inscription in the window testified, there was a large assortment within, which the shopkeeper pledged himself to dispose of, to his countrymen generally, at the reduced rate of one and sixpence each.

"I should ha' forgot it; I should certainly ha' forgot it!" said Sam; so saying, he at once stepped into the stationer's shop, and requested to be served with a sheet of the best gilt-edged letter-paper, and a hard-nibbed pen which could be warranted not to splutter. These articles having been

promptly supplied, he walked on direct towards Leadenhall Market at a good round pace, very different from his recent lingering one. Looking round him, he there beheld a sign-board on which the painter's art had delineated something remotely resembling a cerulean elephant with an aquiline nose in lieu of trunk. Rightly conjecturing that this was the Blue Boar himself, he stepped into the house, and inquired concerning his parent.

"He won't be here this three quarters of an hour or more," said the young lady who superintended the domestic arrangements of the Blue Boar.

"Very good, my dear," replied Sam. "Let me have nine penn'orth o' brandy and water luke, and the inkstand, will you, miss?"

The brandy and water luke, and the inkstand, having been carried into the little parlour, and the young lady having carefully flattened down the coals to prevent their blazing, and carried away the poker to preclude the possibility of the fire being stirred, without the full privity and concurrence of the Blue Boar being first had and obtained, Sam Weller sat himself down in a box near the stove, and pulled out the sheet of gilt-edged letter-paper, and the hard-nibbed pen. Then looking carefully at the pen to see that there were no hairs in it, and dusting down the table, so that there might be no crumbs of bread under the paper, Sam tucked up the cuffs of his coat, squared his elbows, and composed himself to write.

To ladies and gentlemen who are not in the habit of devoting themselves practically to the science of penmanship, writing a letter is no very easy task; it being always considered necessary in such cases for the writer to recline his head on his left arm, so as to place his eyes as nearly as possible on a level with the paper, while glancing sideways at the letters he is constructing, to form with his tongue imaginary characters to correspond. These motions, although unquestionably of the greatest assistance to original composition, retard in some degree the progress of the writer; and Sam had unconsciously been a full hour and a half writing words in small text, smearing out wrong letters with his little finger, and putting in new ones which required going over very often to render them visible through the old blots, when he was roused by the opening of the door and the entrance of his parent.

"Vell, Sammy," said the father.

"Vell, my Prooshan Blue," responded the son, laying down his pen. "What's the last bulletin about mother-in-law?"

"Mrs. Veller passed a very good night, but is uncommon perwerse, and unpleasant this mornin'. Signed upon oath, T. Veller, Esquire, Senior. That's the last vun as was issued, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, untying his shawl.

"No better yet?" inquired Sam.

"All the symptoms aggrawated," replied Mr. Weller, shaking his head. "But wot's that, you're a doing of? Pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, Sammy?"

"I've done now," said Sam with slight embarrassment; "I've been a writin'."

"So I see," replied Mr. Weller. "Not to any young tooman, I hope, Sammy?"

"Why it's no use a sayin' it ain't," replied Sam. "It's a valentine."

"A what!" exclaimed Mr. Weller, apparently horror-stricken by the word.

"A valentine," replied Sam.

"Samivel, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, in reproachful accents, "I didn't think you'd ha' done it. Arter the warnin' you've had o' your father's wicious propensities; arter all I've said to you upon this here wery subject; arter actiwallly seein' and bein' in the company o' your own mother-in-law, vich I should ha' thought wos a moral lesson as no man could never ha' forgotten to his dyin' day! I didn't think you'd ha' done it, Sammy, I didn't think you'd ha' done it!" These reflections were too much for the good old man. He raised Sam's tumbler to his lips and drank off its contents.

"Wot's the matter now?" said Sam.

"Nev'r mind, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller. "it'll be a wery agonizin' trial to me at my time of life, but I'm pretty tough, that's vun consolation, as the wery old turkey remarked wen the farmer said he wos afeerd he should be obliged to kill him for the London market."

"Wot'll be a trial?" inquired Sam.

"To see you married, Sammy—to see you a dilluded wictim, and thinkin' in your innocence that it's all wery capital," replied Mr. Weller. "It's a dreadful trial to a father's feelin's, that 'ere, Sammy."

"Nonsense," said Sam. "I ain't a goin' to get married, don't you fret yourself about that; I know you're a judge

of these things. Order in your pipe, and I'll read you the letter. There!"

We cannot distinctly say whether it was the prospect of the pipe, or the consolatory reflection that a fatal disposition to get married ran in the family and couldn't be helped, which calmed Mr. Weller's feelings, and caused his grief to subside. We should be rather disposed to say that the result was attained by combining the two sources of consolation, for he repeated the second in a low tone, very frequently; ringing the bell meanwhile, to order in the first. He then divested himself of his upper coat; and lighting the pipe and placing himself in front of the fire with his back towards it, so that he could feel its full heat, and recline against the mantelpiece at the same time, turned towards Sam, and, with a countenance greatly mollified by the softening influence of tobacco, requested him to "fire away."

Sam dipped his pen into the ink to be ready for any corrections, and began with a very theatrical air:

"'Lovely——,'"

"Stop," said Mr. Weller, ringing the bell. "A double glass o' the invariable, my dear."

"Very well, sir," replied the girl; who with great quickness appeared, vanished, returned, and disappeared.

"They seem to know your ways here," observed Sam.

"Yes," replied his father, "I've been here before, in my time. Go on, Sammy."

"'Lovely creetur,'" repeated Sam.

"'Tain't in poetry, is it?" interposed his father.

"No, no," replied Sam.

"Werry glad to hear it," said Mr. Weller. "Poetry's unnat'ral; no man ever talked poetry 'cept a beadle on boxin' day, or Warren's blackin', or Rowland's oil, or some o' them low fellows; never you let yourself down to talk poetry, my boy. Begin agin, Sammy."

Mr. Weller resumed his pipe with critical solemnity. and Sam once more commenced, and read as follows:

"'Lovely creetur i feel myself a dammed'—."

"That ain't proper," said Mr. Weller, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"No; it ain't 'dammed'," observed Sam, holding the letter up to the light, "it's 'shamed,' there's a blot there—I feel myself ashamed."

"Werry good," said Mr. Weller. "Go on."



THE VALENTINE

"‘Feel myself ashamed, and completely cir—’ I forget what this here word is," said Sam, scratching his head with the pen, in vain attempts to remember.

"Why don't you look at it, then?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"So I *am* a lookin' at it," replied Sam, "but there's another blot. Here's a 'c,' and a 'i,' and a 'd.'"

"Circumwented, p'raps," suggested Mr. Weller.

"No, it ain't that," said Sam, "circumscribed; that's it."

"That ain't as good a word as circumwented, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, gravely.

"Think not?" said Sam.

"Nothin' like it," replied his father.

"But don't you think it means more?" inquired Sam.

"Vell p'raps it is a more tenderer word," said Mr. Weller, after a few moments' reflection. "Go on, Sammy."

"‘Feel myself ashamed and completely circumscribed in a dressin' of you, for you *are* a nice gal and nothin' but it.'"

"That's a werry pretty sentiment," said the elder Mr. Weller, removing his pipe to make way for the remark.

"Yes, I think it is rayther good," observed Sam, highly flattered.

"Wot I like in that 'ere style of writin'," said the elder Mr. Weller, "is, that there ain't no callin' names in it,—no Wenuses, nor nothin' o' that kind. Wot's the good o' callin' a young 'ooman a Venus or a angel, Sammy?"

"Ah! what, indeed?" replied Sam.

"You might jist as well call her a griffin, or a unicorn, or a king's arms at once, which is werry well known to be a collection o' fabulous animals," added Mr. Weller.

"Just as well," replied Sam.

"Drive on, Sammy," said Mr. Weller.

Sam complied with the request, and proceeded as follows; his father continuing to smoke, with a mixed expression of wisdom and complacency, which was particularly edifying.

"‘Afore I see you, I thought all women was alike.'"

"So they *are*," observed the elder Mr. Weller, parenthetically.

"‘But now,' continued Sam, 'now I find what a reg'lar soft-headed, inkred'lous turnip I must ha' been; for there ain't nobody like you, though *I* like you better than nothin' at all.' I thought it best to make that rayther strong," said Sam, looking up.

Mr. Weller nodded approvingly, and Sam resumed.

“So I take the priviledge of the day, Mary, my dear—as the gen'l'm'n in difficulties did, ven he valked out of a Sunday,—to tell you that the first and only time I see you, your likeness was took on my hart in much quicker time and brighter colours than ever a likeness was took by the profeel macheen (wich p'raps you may have heerd on Mary my dear) altho it *does* finish a portrait and put the frame and glass on complete, with a hook at the end to hang it up by, and all in two minutes and a quarter.”

“I am afeerd that verges on the poetical, Sammy,” said Mr. Weller, dubiously.

“No it don't,” replied Sam, reading on very quickly, to avoid contesting the point:

“Except of me Mary my dear as your valentine and think over what I've said.—My dear Mary I will now conclude.' That's all,” said Sam.

“That's rather a sudden pull up, ain't it, Sammy?” inquired Mr. Weller.

“Not a bit on it,” said Sam; “she'll vish there wos more, and that's the great art o' letter writin'.”

“Well,” said Mr. Weller, “there's somethin' in that; and I wish your mother-in-law 'ud only conduct her conversation on the same gen-teel principle. Ain't you a goin' to sign it?”

“That's the difficulty,” said Sam; I don't know what *to* sign it.”

“Sign it, Veller,” said the oldest surviving proprietor of that name.

“Won't do,” said Sam. “Never sign a valentine with your own name.”

“Sign it ‘Pickvick,’ then,” said Mr. Weller; it's a werry good name, and a easy one to spell.”

“The wery thing,” said Sam. “I *could* end with a werse; what do you think?”

“I don't like it, Sam,” rejoined Mr. Weller. “I never know'd a respectable coachman as wrote poetry, 'cept one, as made an affectin' copy o' worses the night afore he wos hung for a highway robbery; and *he* wos only a Cambervell man, so even that's no rule.”

But Sam was not to be dissuaded from the poetical idea that had occurred to him, so he signed the letter,

“Your love-sick
Pickwick.”

And having folded it, in a very intricate manner, squeezed a down-hill direction in one corner: "To Mary, Housemaid, at Mr. Nupkins's Mayor's, Ipswich, Suffolk;" and put it into his pocket, wafered, and ready for the General Post. This important business having been transacted, Mr. Weller the elder proceeded to open that, on which he had summoned his son.

"The first matter relates to your governor, Sammy," said Mr. Weller. "He's a goin' o be tried to-morrow, ain't he?"

"The trial's a comin' on," replied Sam.

"Vell," said Mr. Weller, "Now I s'pose he'll want to call some witnesses to speak to his character, or p'raps to prove a alleybi. I've been a turn'n' the bis'ness over in my mind, and he may make his-self easy, Sammy. I've got some friends as'll do either for him, but my advice 'ud be this here—never mind the character, and stick to the alleybi. Nothing like a alleybi, Sammy, nothing." Mr. Weller looked very profound as he delivered this legal opinion; and burying his nose in his tumbler, winked over the top thereof, at his astonished son.

"Why, what do you mean?" said Sam; "you don't think he's a goin' to be tried at the Old Bailey, do you?"

"That ain't no part of the present consideration, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller. "Verever he's a goin' to be tried, my boy, a alleybi's the thing to get him off. Ve got Tom Vildspark off that 'ere manslaughter, with a alleybi, ven all the big vigs to a man said as nothing couldn't save him. And my 'pinion is, Sammy, that if your governor don't prove a alleybi, he'll be what the Italians call reg'larly flummoxed, and that's all about it."

As the elder Mr. Weller entertained a firm and unalterable conviction that the Old Bailey was the supreme court of judicature in this country, and that its rules and forms of proceeding regulated and controlled the practice of all other courts of justice whatsoever, he totally disregarded the assurances and arguments of his son, tending to show that the alibi was inadmissible; and vehemently protested that Mr. Pickwick was being "wictimised." Finding that it was of no use to discuss the matter further, Sam changed the subject.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IS WHOLLY DEVOTED TO A FULL AND FAITHFUL REPORT
OF THE MEMORABLE TRIAL OF BARDELL AGAINST
PICKWICK

"I WONDER what the foreman of the jury, whoever he'll be, has got for breakfast," said Mr. Snodgrass, by way of keeping up a conversation on the eventful morning of the fourteenth of February.

"Ah!" said Perker, "I hope he's got a good one."

"Why so?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Highly important; very important, my dear sir," replied Perker. "A good, contented, well-breakfasted jurymen, is a capital thing to get hold of. Discontented or hungry jurymen, my dear sir, always find for the plaintiff."

"Bless my heart," said Mr. Pickwick, looking very blank; "what do they do that for?"

"Why, I don't know," replied the little man, coolly; "saves time, I suppose. If it's near dinner-time, the foreman takes out his watch when the jury has retired, and says, 'Dear me, gentlemen, ten minutes to five, I declare! I dine at five, gentlemen.' 'So do I,' says every body else, except two men who ought to have dined at three, and seem more than half disposed to stand out in consequence. The foreman smiles, and puts up his watch:—'Well, gentlemen, what do we say, plaintiff or defendant, gentlemen? I rather think, so far as I am concerned, gentlemen,—I say, I rather think,—but don't let that influence you—I *rather* think the plaintiff's the man.' Upon this, two or three other men are sure to say that they think so too—as of course they do; and then they get on very unanimously and comfortably. Ten minutes past nine!" said the little man, looking at his watch. "Time we were off, my dear sir; breach of promise trial

—court is generally full in such cases. You had better ring for a coach, my dear sir, or we shall be rather late.”

Mr. Pickwick immediately rang the bell; and a coach having been procured, the four Pickwickians and Mr. Perker ensconced themselves therein, and drove to Guildhall; Sam Weller, Mr. Lowten, and the blue bag, following in a cab.

“Lowten,” said Perker, when they reached the outer hall of the court, “put Mr. Pickwick’s friends in the students’ box; Mr. Pickwick himself had better sit by me. This way, my dear sir, this way.” Taking Mr. Pickwick by the coat-sleeve, the little man led him to the low seat just beneath the desks of the King’s Counsel, which is constructed for the convenience of attorneys, who from that spot can whisper into the ear of the leading counsel in the case, any instructions that may be necessary during the progress of the trial. The occupants of this seat are invisible to the great body of spectators, inasmuch as they sit on a much lower level than either the barristers or the audience, whose seats are raised above the floor. Of course they have their backs to both, and their faces towards the judge.

“That’s the witness-box, I suppose?” said Mr. Pickwick, pointing to a kind of pulpit, with a brass rail, on his left hand.

“That’s the witness-box, my dear sir,” replied Perker, disinterring a quantity of papers from the blue bag, which Lowten had just deposited at his feet.

“And that,” said Mr. Pickwick, pointing to a couple of enclosed seats on his right, “that’s where the jurymen sit, is it not?”

“The identical place, my dear sir,” replied Perker, tapping the lid of his snuff-box.

Mr. Pickwick stood up in a state of great agitation, and took a glance at the court. There were already a pretty large sprinkling of spectators in the gallery, and a numerous muster of gentlemen in wigs, in the barristers’ seats: who presented, as a body, all that pleasing and extensive variety of nose and whisker for which the bar of England is so justly celebrated. Such of the gentlemen as had a brief to carry, carried it in as conspicuous a manner as possible, and occasionally scratched their noses therewith, to impress the fact more strongly on the observation of the spectators. Other gentlemen, who had no briefs to show, carried under

their arms goodly octavos, with a red label behind, and that underdone-pie-crust-coloured cover, which is technically known as "law calf." Others, who had neither briefs nor books, thrust their hands into their pockets, and looked as wise as they conveniently could; others, again, moved here and there with great restlessness and earnestness of manner, content to awaken thereby the admiration and astonishment of the uninitiated strangers. The whole, to the great wonderment of Mr. Pickwick, were divided into little groups, who were chatting and discussing the news of the day in the most unfeeling manner possible,—just as if no trial at all were coming on.

A bow from Mr. Phunky, as he entered, and took his seat behind the row appropriated to the King's Counsel, attracted Mr. Pickwick's attention; and he had scarcely returned it, when Mr. Serjeant Snubbin appeared, followed by Mr. Malard, who half hid the Serjeant behind a large crimson bag, which he placed on his table, and, after shaking hands with Perker, withdrew. Then there entered two or three more Serjeants; and among them, one with a fat body and a red face, who nodded in a friendly manner to Mr. Serjeant Snubbin, and said it was a fine morning.

"Who's that red-faced man, who said it was a fine morning, and nodded to our counsel?" whispered Mr. Pickwick.

"Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz," replied Perker. "He's opposed to us; he leads on the other side. That gentleman behind him is Mr. Skimpin, his junior."

Mr. Pickwick was on the point of inquiring, with great abhorrence of the man's cold-blooded villany, how Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, who was counsel for the opposite party, dared to presume to tell Mr. Serjeant Snubbin, who was counsel for him, that it was a fine morning, when he was interrupted by a general rising of the barristers, and a loud cry of "Silence!" from the officers of the court. Looking round, he found that this was caused by the entrance of the judge.

"Mr. Justice Stareleigh (who sat in the absence of the Chief Justice, occasioned by indisposition), was a most particularly short man, and so fat, that he seemed all face and waistcoat. He rolled in, upon two little turned legs, and having bobbed gravely to the bar, who bobbed gravely to him, put his little legs underneath his table, and his little three-cornered hat upon it; and when Mr. Justice Stareleigh had done this, all you could see of him was two queer little

eyes, one broad pink face, and somewhere about half of a big and very comical-looking wig.

The judge had no sooner taken his seat, than the officer on the floor of the court called out "Silence!" in a commanding tone, upon which another officer in the gallery cried "Silence!" in an angry manner, whereupon three or four more ushers shouted "Silence!" in a voice of indignant remonstrance. This being done, a gentleman in black, who sat below the judge, proceeded to call over the names of the jury; and after a great deal of bawling, it was discovered that only ten special jurymen were present. Upon this, Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz prayed *a tales*; the gentleman in black then proceeded to press into the special jury, two of the common jurymen; and a green-grocer and a chemist were caught directly.

"Answer to your names, gentlemen, that you may be sworn," said the gentleman in black. "Richard Upwich."

"Here," said the green-grocer.

"Thomas Groffin."

"Here," said the chemist.

"Take the book, gentlemen. You shall well and truly try—"

"I beg this court's pardon," said the chemist, who was a tall, thin, yellow-visaged man, "but I hope this court will excuse my attendance."

"On what grounds, sir?" said Mr. Justice Stareleigh.

"I have no assistant, my Lord," said the chemist.

"I can't help that, sir," replied Mr. Justice Stareleigh. "You should hire one."

"I can't afford it, my Lord," rejoined the chemist.

"Then you ought to be able to afford it, sir," said the judge, reddening; for Mr. Justice Stareleigh's temper bordered on the irritable, and brooked not contradiction.

"I know I *ought* to do, if I got on as well as I deserved, but I don't, my Lord," answered the chemist.

"Swear the gentleman," said the judge, peremptorily.

The officer had got no further than the "You shall well and truly try," when he was again interrupted by the chemist.

"I am to be sworn, my Lord, am I?" said the chemist.

"Certainly, sir," replied the testy little judge.

"Very well, my Lord," replied the chemist, in a resigned manner. "Then there'll be murder before this trial's over ;

that's all. Swear me, if you please, sir ;" and sworn the chemist was, before the judge could find words to utter.

"I merely wanted to observe, my Lord," said the chemist, taking his seat with great deliberation, "that I've left nobody but an errand-boy in my shop. He is a very nice boy, my Lord, but he is not acquainted with drugs ; and I know that the prevailing impression on his mind is, that Epsom salts means oxalic acid ; and syrup of senna, laudanum. That's all, my Lord." With this, the tall chemist composed himself into a comfortable attitude, and, assuming a pleasant expression of countenance, appeared to have prepared himself for the worst.

Mr. Pickwick was regarding the chemist with feelings of the deepest horror, when a slight sensation was perceptible in the body of the court ; and immediately afterwards Mrs. Bardell, supported by Mrs. Cluppins, was led in, and placed, in a drooping state, at the other end of the seat on which Mr. Pickwick sat. An extra sized umbrella was then handed in by Mr. Dodson, and a pair of pattens by Mr. Fogg, each of whom had prepared a most sympathising and melancholy face for the occasion. Mrs. Sanders then appeared, leading in Master Bardell. At sight of her child, Mrs. Bardell started ; suddenly recollecting herself, she kissed him in a frantic manner ; then relapsing into a state of hysterical imbecility, the good lady requested to be informed where she was. In reply to this, Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders turned their heads away and wept, while Messrs. Dodson and Fogg intreated the plaintiff to compose herself. Serjeant Buzfuz rubbed his eyes very hard with a large white handkerchief, and gave an appealing look towards the jury, while the judge was visibly affected, and several of the beholders tried to cough down their emotions.

"Very good notion that, indeed," whispered Perker to Mr. Pickwick. "Capital fellows those Dodson and Fogg ; excellent ideas of effect, my dear sir, excellent."

As Perker spoke, Mrs. Bardell began to recover by slow degrees, while Mrs. Cluppins, after a careful survey of Master Bardell's buttons and the button-holes to which they severally belonged, placed him on the floor of the court in front of his mother,—a commanding position in which he could not fail to awaken the full commiseration and sympathy of both judge and jury. This was not done without considerable

opposition, and many tears, on the part of the young gentleman himself, who had certain inward misgivings that the placing him within the full glare of the judge's eye was only a formal prelude to his being immediately ordered away for instant execution, or for transportation beyond the seas, during the whole term of his natural life, at the very least.

"Bardell and Pickwick," cried the gentleman in black calling on the case, which stood first on the list.

"I am for the plaintiff my Lord," said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz.

"Who is with you, brother Buzfuz?" said the judge. Mr. Skimpin bowed, to intimate that he was.

"I appear for the defendant, my Lord," said Mr. Serjeant Snubbin.

"Anybody with you, brother Snubbin?" inquired the court.

"Mr. Phunky, my Lord," replied Serjeant Snubbin.

"Serjeant Buzfuz and Mr. Skimpin for the plaintiff," said the judge, writing down the names in his note-book, and reading as he wrote; "for the defendant, Serjeant Snubbin and Mr. Monkey."

"Beg your Lordship's pardon, Phunky."

"Oh, very good," said the judge; "I never had the pleasure of hearing the gentleman's name before." Here Mr. Phunky bowed and smiled, and the judge bowed and smiled too, and then Mr. Phunky, blushing into the very whites of his eyes, tried to look as if he didn't know that everybody was gazing at him: a thing which no man ever succeeded in doing yet, or in all reasonable probability, ever will.

"Go on," said the judge.

The ushers again called silence, and Mr. Skimpin proceeded to "open the case;" and the case appeared to have very little inside it when he had opened it, for he kept such particulars as he knew, completely to himself, and sat down, after a lapse of three minutes, leaving the jury in precisely the same advanced stage of wisdom as they were in before.

Serjeant Buzfuz then rose with all the majesty and dignity which the grave nature of the proceedings demanded, and having whispered to Dodson, and conferred briefly with Fogg, pulled his gown over his shoulders, settled his wig, and addressed the jury.

Serjeant Buzfuz began by saying, that never, in the whole course of his professional experience—never, from the very first moment of his applying himself to the study and practice of the law—had he approached a case with feelings of such deep emotion, or with such a heavy sense of the responsibility imposed upon him—a responsibility, he would say, which he could never have supported, were he not buoyed up and sustained by a conviction so strong, that it amounted to positive certainty that the cause of truth and justice, or, in other words, the cause of his much-injured and most oppressed client, must prevail with the high-minded and intelligent dozen of men whom he now saw in that box before him.

Counsel usually begin in this way, because it puts the jury on the very best terms with themselves, and makes them think what sharp fellows they must be. A visible effect was produced immediately; several jurymen beginning to take voluminous notes with the utmost eagerness.

“You have heard from my learned friend, gentlemen,” continued Serjeant Buzfuz, well knowing that, from the learned friend alluded to, the gentlemen of the jury had heard just nothing at all—“you have heard from my learned friend, gentlemen, that this is an action for a breach of promise of marriage, in which the damages are laid at £1,500. But you have not heard from my learned friend, inasmuch as it did not come within my learned friend’s province to tell you, what are the facts and circumstances of the case. Those facts and circumstances, gentlemen, you shall hear detailed by me, and proved by the unimpeachable female whom I will place in that box before you.”

Here Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, with a tremendous emphasis on the word “box,” smote his table with a mighty sound, and glanced at Dodson and Fogg, who nodded admiration of the serjeant, and indignant defiance of the defendant.

“The plaintiff, gentlemen,” continued Serjeant Buzfuz, in a soft and melancholy voice, “the plaintiff is a widow; yes, gentlemen, a widow. The late Mr. Bardell, after enjoying, for many years, the esteem and confidence of his sovereign, as one of the guardians of his royal revenues, glided almost imperceptibly from the world, to seek elsewhere for that repose and peace which a custom-house can never afford.”

At this pathetic description of the decease of Mr. Bardell, who had been knocked on the head with a quart-pot in a

public-house cellar, the learned serjeant's voice faltered, and he proceeded with emotion :

"Some time before his death, he had stamped his likeness upon a little boy. With this little boy, the only pledge of her departed exciseman, Mrs. Bardell shrunk from the world, and courted the retirement and tranquillity of Goswell Street; and here she placed in her front parlour-window a written placard, bearing this inscription—'Apartments furnished for a single gentleman. Inquire within.'" Here Serjeant Buzfuz paused, while several gentlemen of the jury took a note of the document.

"There is no date to that is there, sir?" inquired a juror.

"There is no date, gentlemen," replied Serjeant Buzfuz; "but I am instructed to say that it was put in the plaintiff's parlour-window just this time three years. I intreat the attention of the jury to the wording of this document. 'Apartments furnished for a single gentleman'! Mrs. Bardell's opinions of the opposite sex, gentlemen, were derived from a long contemplation of the inestimable qualities of her lost husband. She had no fear, she had no distrust, she had no suspicion, all was confidence and reliance. 'Mr. Bardell,' said the widow; 'Mr. Bardell was a man of honour, Mr. Bardell was a man of his word, Mr. Bardell was no deceiver, Mr. Bardell was once a single gentleman himself; to single gentlemen I look for protection, for assistance, for comfort, and for consolation; *in* single gentlemen I shall perpetually see something to remind me of what Mr. Bardell was, when he first won my young and untried affections; to a single gentleman, then, shall my lodgings be let.' Actuated by this beautiful and touching impulse (among the best impulses of our imperfect nature, gentlemen,) the lonely and desolate widow dried her tears, furnished her first floor, caught the innocent boy to her maternal bosom, and put the bill up in her parlour-window. Did it remain there long? No. The serpent was on the watch, the train was laid, the mine was preparing, the sapper and miner was at work. Before the bill had been in the parlour-window three days—three days—gentlemen—a Being, erect upon two legs, and bearing all the outward semblance of a man, and not of a monster, knocked at the door of Mrs. Bardell's house. He inquired within; he took the lodgings; and on the very next day he entered into possession of them. This man was Pickwick—Pickwick, the defendant."

Serjeant Buzfuz, who had proceeded with such volubility that his face was perfectly crimson, here paused for breath. The silence awoke Mr. Justice Stareleigh, who immediately wrote down something with a pen without any ink in it, and looked unusually profound, to impress the jury with the belief that he always thought most deeply with his eyes shut. Serjeant Buzfuz proceeded.

"Of this man Pickwick I will say little; the subject presents but few attractions; and I, gentlemen, am not the man, nor are you, gentlemen, the men, to delight in the contemplation of revolting heartlessness, and of systematic villany."

Here Mr. Pickwick, who had been writhing in silence for some time, gave a violent start, as if some vague idea of assaulting Serjeant Buzfuz, in the august presence of justice and law, suggested itself to his mind. An admonitory gesture from Perker restrained him, and he listened to the learned gentleman's continuation with a look of indignation, which contrasted forcibly with the admiring faces of Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders.

"I say systematic villany, gentlemen," said Serjeant Buzfuz, looking through Mr. Pickwick, and talking *at* him; "and when I say systematic villany, let me tell the defendant Pickwick, if he be in court, as I am informed he is, that it would have been more decent in him, more becoming, in better judgment, and in better taste, if he had stopped away. Let me tell him, gentlemen, that any gestures of dissent or disapprobation in which he may indulge in this court will not go down with you; that you will know how to value and how to appreciate them; and let me tell him further, as my lord will tell you, gentlemen, that a counsel, in the discharge of his duty to his client, is neither to be intimidated, nor bullied, nor put down; and that any attempt to do either the one or the other, or the first, or the last, will recoil on the head of the attempter, be he plaintiff or be he defendant, be his name Pickwick, or Noakes, or Stoakes, or Stiles, or Brown, or Thompson."

This little divergence from the subject in hand, had of course, the intended effect of turning all eyes to Mr. Pickwick. Serjeant Buzfuz, having partially recovered from the state of moral elevation into which he had lashed himself, resumed:

"I shall show you, gentlemen, that for two years Pickwick



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continued to reside constantly, and without interruption or intermission, at Mrs. Bardell's house. I shall show you that Mrs. Bardell, during the whole of that time waited on him, attended to his comforts, cooked his meals, looked out his linen for the washerwoman when it went abroad, darned, aired, and prepared it for wear, when it came home, and, in short, enjoyed his fullest trust and confidence. I shall show you that, on many occasions, he gave halfpence, and on some occasions even sixpences, to her little boy : and I shall prove to you, by a witness whose testimony it will be impossible for my learned friend to weaken or controvert, that on one occasion he patted the boy on the head, and, after inquiring whether he had won any *alley tors* or *commonneys* lately (both of which I understand to be a particular species of marbles much prized by the youth of this town), made use of this remarkable expression : 'I ow should you like to have another father?' I shall prove to you, gentlemen, that about a year ago, Pickwick suddenly began to absent himself from home, during long intervals, as if with the intention of gradually breaking off from my client ; but I shall show you also, that his resolution was not at that time sufficiently strong, or that his better feelings conquered, if better feelings he has, or that the charms and accomplishments of my client prevailed against his unmanly intentions : by proving to you, that on one occasion, when he returned from the country, he distinctly and in terms, offered her marriage : previously however, taking special care that there should be no witness to their solemn contract ; and I am in a situation to prove to you, on the testimony of three of his own friends.—most unwilling witnesses, gentlemen—most unwilling witnesses—that on that morning he was discovered by them holding the plaintiff in his arms, and soothing her agitation by his caresses and endearments."

A visible impression was produced upon the auditors by this part of the learned serjeant's address. Drawing forth two very small scraps of paper, he proceeded :

"And now, gentlemen, but one word more. Two letters have passed between these parties, letters which are admitted to be in the handwriting of the defendant, and which speak volumes indeed. These letters, too, bespeak the character of the man. They are not open, fervent, eloquent epistles, breathing nothing but the language of affectionate attachment. They are covert, sly, underhanded communications,

but, fortunately, far more conclusive than if couched in the most glowing language and the most poetic imagery—letters that must be viewed with a cautious and suspicious eye—letters that were evidently intended at the time, by Pickwick, to mislead and delude any third parties into whose hands they might fall. Let me read the first :—‘Garraway’s, twelve o’clock. Dear Mrs. B.—Chops and Tomato sauce. Yours, PICKWICK.’ Gentlemen, what does this mean? Chops and Tomato sauce! Yours, Pickwick! Chops! Gracious heavens! and Tomato sauce! Gentlemen, is the happiness of a sensitive and confiding female to be trifled away, by such shallow artifices as these? The next has no date whatever, which is in itself suspicious. ‘Dear Mrs. B., I shall not be at home till to-morrow. Slow coach.’ And then follows this very remarkable expression. ‘Don’t trouble yourself about the warming-pan.’ The warming-pan! Why, gentlemen, who *does* trouble himself about a warming-pan? When was the peace of mind of man or woman broken or disturbed by a warming-pan, which is in itself a harmless, a useful, and I will add, gentlemen, a comforting article of domestic furniture? Why is Mrs. Bardell so earnestly entreated not to agitate herself about this warming-pan, unless (as is no doubt the case) it is a mere cover for hidden fire—a mere substitute for some endearing word or promise, agreeably to a preconcerted system of correspondence, artfully contrived by Pickwick with a view to his contemplated desertion, and which I am not in a condition to explain? And what does this allusion to the slow coach mean? For aught I know, it may be a reference to Pickwick himself, who has most unquestionably been a criminally slow coach during the whole of this transaction, but whose speed will now be very unexpectedly accelerated, and whose wheels, gentlemen, as he will find to his cost, will very soon be greased by you!”

Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz paused in this place, to see whether the jury smiled at his joke; but as nobody took it but the greengrocer, whose sensitiveness on the subject was very probably occasioned by his having subjected a chaise-cart to the process in question on that identical morning, the learned serjeant considered it advisable to undergo a slight relapse into the dimals before he concluded.

“But enough of this, gentlemen,” said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, “it is difficult to smile with an aching heart; it is ill jesting when our deepest sympathies are awakened. My client’s

hopes and prospects are ruined, and it is no figure of speech to say that her occupation is gone indeed. The bill is down—but there is no tenant. Eligible single gentlemen pass and repass—but there is no invitation for them to inquire within or without. All is gloom and silence in the house; even the voice of the child is hushed; his infant sports are disregarded when his mother weeps; his ‘alley tors’ and his ‘commoneys’ are alike neglected; he forgets the long familiar cry of ‘knuckle down,’ and at tip-cheese, or odd and even, his hand is out. But Pickwick, gentlemen, Pickwick, the ruthless destroyer of this domestic oasis in the desert of Goswell Street—Pickwick, who has choked up the well, and thrown ashes on the sward—Pickwick, who comes before you to-day with his heartless Tomato sauce and warming-pans—Pickwick still rears his head with unblushing effrontery, and gazes without a sigh on the ruin he has made. Damages, gentlemen—heavy damages is the only punishment with which you can visit him: the only recompence you can award to my client. And for those damages she now appeals to an enlightened, a high-minded, a right-feeling, a conscientious, a dispassionate, a sympathising, a contemplative jury of her civilised countrymen.” With this beautiful peroration, Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz sat down, and Mr. Justice Stareleigh woke up.

“Call Elizabeth Cluppins,” said Serjeant Buzfuz, rising a minute afterwards, with renewed vigour.

The nearest usher called for Elizabeth Tuppins; another one, at a little distance off, demanded Elizabeth Jupkins; and a third rushed in a breathless state into King Street, and screamed for Elizabeth Muffins till he was hoarse.

Meanwhile Mrs. Cluppins, with the combined assistance of Mrs. Bardell, Mrs. Sanders, Mr. Dodson, and Mr. Fogg, was hoisted into the witness-box; and when she was safely perched on the top step, Mrs. Bardell stood on the bottom one, with the pocket-handkerchief and pattens in one hand, and a glass bottle that might hold about a quarter of a pint of smelling salts in the other, ready for any emergency. Mrs. Sanders, whose eyes were intently fixed on the judge’s face, planted herself close by, with the large umbrella: keeping her right thumb pressed on the spring with an earnest countenance, as if she were fully prepared to put it up at a moment’s notice.

“Mrs. Cluppins,” said Serjeant Buzfuz, “pray compose yourself, ma’am.” Of course, directly Mrs. Cluppins was

desired to compose herself she sobbed with increased vehemence, and gave divers alarming manifestations of an approaching fainting fit, or, as she afterwards said, of her feelings being too many for her.

"Do you recollect, Mrs. Cluppins?" said Serjeant Buzfuz, after a few unimportant questions, "do you recollect being in Mrs. Bardell's back one pair of stairs, on one particular morning in July last, when she was dusting Pickwick's apartment?"

"Yes, my Lord and Jury, I do," replied Mrs. Cluppins.

"Mr. Pickwick's sitting-room was the first-floor front, I believe?"

"Yes, it were, sir," replied Mrs. Cluppins.

"What were you doing in the back room, ma'am?" inquired the little judge.

"My Lord and Jury," said Mrs. Cluppins, with interesting agitation, "I will not deceive you."

"You had better not, ma'am," said the little judge.

"I was there," resumed Mrs. Cluppins, "unbeknown to Mrs. Bardell; I had been out with a little basket, gentlemen, to buy three pound of red kidney purtaties, which was three pound tuppence ha'penny, when I see Mrs. Bardell's street door on the jar."

"On the what?" exclaimed the little judge.

"Partly open, my Lord," said Serjeant Snubbin.

"She *said* on the jar," said the little judge, with a cunning look.

"It's all the same, my Lord," said Serjeant Snubbin. The little judge looked doubtful, and said he'd make a note of it. Mrs. Cluppins then resumed:

"I walked in, gentlemen, just to say good mornin', and went, in a permiscuous manner, up stairs, and into the back room. Gentlemen, there was the sound of voices in the front room, and——"

"And you listened, I believe, Mrs Cluppins?" said Serjeant Buzfuz.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," replied Mrs. Cluppins, in a majestic manner, "I would scorn the haction. The voices was very loud, sir, and forced themselves upon my ear."

"Well, Mrs. Cluppins, you were not listening, but you heard the voices. Was one of those voices, Pickwick's?"

"Yes, it were, sir."

And Mrs. Cluppins, after distinctly stating that Mr. Pick-

wick addressed himself to Mrs. Bardell, repeated, by slow degrees, and by dint of many questions, the conversation with which our readers are already acquainted.

The jury looked suspicious, and Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz smiled and sat down. They looked positively awful when Serjeant Snubbin intimated that he should not cross-examine the witness, for Mr. Pickwick wished it to be distinctly stated that it was due to her to say, that her account was in substance correct.

Mrs. Cluppins having once broken the ice, thought it a favourable opportunity for entering into a short dissertation on her own domestic affairs; so, she straightway proceeded to inform the court that she was the mother of eight children at that present speaking, and that she entertained confident expectations of presenting Mr. Cluppins with a ninth, somewhere about that day six months. At this interesting point, the little judge interposed most irascibly; and the effect of the interposition was, that both the worthy lady and Mrs. Sanders were politely taken out of court, under the escort of Mr. Jackson, without further parley.

"Nathaniel Winkle!" said Mr. Skimpin.

"Here!" replied a feeble voice. Mr. Winkle entered the witness box, and having been duly sworn, bowed to the judge with considerable deference.

"Don't look at me, sir," said the judge, sharply, in acknowledgment of the salute; "look at the jury."

Mr. Winkle obeyed the mandate, and looked at the place where he thought it most probable the jury might be; for seeing anything in his then state of intellectual complication was wholly out of the question.

Mr. Winkle was then examined by Mr. Skimpin, who, being a promising young man of two or three and forty, was of course anxious to confuse a witness who was notoriously predisposed in favour of the other side, as much as he could.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Skimpin, "have the goodness to let his Lordship and the jury know what your name is, will you?" and Mr. Skimpin inclined his head on one side to listen with great sharpness to the answer, and glanced at the jury meanwhile, as if to imply that he rather expected Mr. Winkle's natural taste for perjury would induce him to give some name which did not belong to him.

"Winkle," replied the witness.

"What's your Christian name, sir?" angrily inquired the little judge.

"Nathaniel, sir."

"Daniel,—any other name?"

"Nathaniel, sir—my Lord, I mean."

"Nathaniel Daniel, or Daniel Nathaniel?"

"No, my Lord, only Nathaniel; not Daniel at all."

"What did you tell me it was Daniel for, then, sir?" inquired the judge.

"I didn't, my Lord," replied Mr. Winkle.

"You did, sir," replied the judge, with a severe frown.

"How could I have got Daniel on my notes, unless you told me so, sir?"

This argument was, of course, unanswerable.

"Mr. Winkle has rather a short memory, my Lord," interposed Mr. Skimpin, with another glance at the jury. "We shall find means to refresh it before we have quite done with him, I dare say."

"You had better be careful, sir," said the little judge, with a sinister look at the witness.

Poor Mr. Winkle bowed, and endeavoured to feign an easiness of manner, which, in his then state of confusion, gave him rather the air of a disconcerted pickpocket.

"Now, Mr. Winkle," said Mr. Skimpin, "attend to me, if you please, sir; and let me recommend you, for your own sake, to bear in mind his Lordship's injunction to be careful. I believe you are a particular friend of Pickwick, the defendant, are you not?"

"I have known Mr. Pickwick now, as well as I recollect at this moment, nearly——"

"Pray, Mr. Winkle, do not evade the question. Are you, or are you not, a particular friend of the defendant's?"

"I was just about to say, that——"

"Will you, or will you not, answer my question, sir?"

"If you don't answer the question you'll be committed, sir," interposed the little judge, looking over his note-book.

"Come, sir," said Mr. Skimpin, "yes or no, if you please."

"Yes, I am," replied Mr. Winkle.

"Yes, you are. And why couldn't you say that at once, sir? Perhaps you know the plaintiff, too? Eh, Mr. Winkle?"

"I don't know her; I've seen her."

"Oh, you don't know her, but you've seen her? Now,

have the goodness to tell the gentlemen of the jury what you mean by *that*, Mr. Winkle."

"I mean that I am not intimate with her, but I have seen her when I went to call on Mr. Pickwick in Goswell Street."

"How often have you seen her, sir?"

"How often?"

"Yes, Mr. Winkle, how often? I'll repeat the question for you a dozen times, if you require it, sir." And the learned gentleman, with a firm and steady frown, placed his hands on his hips, and smiled suspiciously at the jury.

On this question there arose the edifying brow-beating, customary on such points. First of all, Mr. Winkle said it was quite impossible for him to say how many times he had seen Mrs. Bardell. Then he was asked if he had seen her twenty times, to which he replied, "Certainly,—more than that." Then he was asked whether he hadn't seen her a hundred times—whether he couldn't swear that he had seen her more than fifty times—whether he didn't know that he had seen her at least seventy-five times—and so forth; the satisfactory conclusion which was arrived at, at last, being, that he had better take care of himself, and mind what he was about. The witness having been by these means reduced to the requisite ebb of nervous perplexity, the examination was continued as follows:

"Pray, Mr. Winkle, do you remember calling on the defendant Pickwick at these apartments in the plaintiff's house in Goswell Street, on one particular morning, in the month of July last?"

"Yes, I do."

"Were you accompanied on that occasion by a friend of the name of Tupman, and another of the name of Snodgrass?"

"Yes, I was."

"Are they here?"

"Yes, they are," replied Mr. Winkle, looking very earnestly towards the spot where his friends were stationed.

"Pray attend to me, Mr. Winkle, and never mind your friends," said Mr. Skimpin, with another expressive look at the jury. "They must tell their stories without any previous consultation with you, if none has yet taken place (another look at the jury). Now, sir, tell the gentlemen of the jury what you saw on entering the defendant's room, on this

particular morning. Come ; out with it, sir ; we must have it, sooner or later."

"The defendant, Mr. Pickwick, was holding the plaintiff in his arms, with his hands clasping her waist," replied Mr. Winkle with natural hesitation, "and the plaintiff appeared to have fainted away."

"Did you hear the defendant say anything ?"

"I heard him call Mrs. Bardell a good creature, and I heard him ask her to compose herself, for what a situation it was, if any body should come, or words to that effect."

"Now, Mr. Winkle, I have only one more question to ask you, and I beg you to bear in mind his lordship's caution. Will you undertake to swear that Pickwick, the defendant, did not say on the occasion in question, 'My dear Mrs. Bardell, you're a good creature ; compose yourself to this situation, for to this situation you must come,' or words to *that* effect ?"

"I—I didn't understand him so, certainly," said Mr. Winkle, astounded at this ingenious dove-tailing of the few words he had heard, "I was on the staircase, and couldn't hear distinctly ; the impression on my mind is—"

"The gentlemen of the jury want none of the impressions on your mind, Mr. Winkle, which I fear would be of little service to honest, straightforward men," interposed Mr. Skimpin. "You were on the staircase, and didn't distinctly hear ; but you will not swear that Pickwick did not make use of the expressions I have quoted ? Do I understand that ?"

"No, I will not," replied Mr. Winkle ; and down sat Mr. Skimpin with a triumphant countenance.

Mr. Pickwick's case had not gone off in so particularly happy a manner, up to this point, that it could very well afford to have any additional suspicion cast upon it. But as it could afford to be placed in a rather better light, if possible, Mr. Phunky rose for the purpose of getting something important out of Mr. Winkle in cross-examination. Whether he did get anything important out of him, will immediately appear.

"I believe, Mr. Winkle," said Mr. Phunky, "that Mr. Pickwick is not a young man ?"

"Oh no," replied Mr. Winkle, "old enough to be my father."

"You have told my learned friend that you have known Mr. Pickwick a long time. Had you ever any reason to suppose or believe that he was about to be married ?"

"Oh no ; certainly not ;" replied Mr. Winkle with so much eagerness, that Mr. Phunky ought to have got him out of the box with all possible dispatch. Lawyers hold that there are two kinds of particularly bad witnesses : a reluctant witness, and a too-willing witness ; it was Mr. Winkle's fate to figure in both characters.

"I will even go further than this, Mr. Winkle," continued Mr Phunky in a most smooth and complacent manner. "Did you ever see anything in Mr. Pickwick's manner and conduct towards the opposite sex, to induce you to believe that he ever contemplated matrimony of late years, in any case ?"

"Oh no ; certainly not," replied Mr. Winkle.

"Has his behaviour, when females have been in the case, always been that of a man, who, having attained a pretty advanced period of life, content with his own occupations and amusements, treats them only as a father might his daughters ?"

"Not the least doubt of it," replied Mr. Winkle, in the fulness of his heart. "That is—yes—oh yes—certainly."

"You have never known anything in his behaviour towards Mrs. Bardell, or any other female, in the least degree suspicious ?" said Mr. Phunky, preparing to sit down ; for Serjeant Snubbin was winking at him.

"N—n—no," replied Mr. Winkle. "except on one trifling occasion, which, I have no doubt, might be easily explained."

Now, if the unfortunate Mr. Phunky had sat down when Serjeant Snubbin winked at him, or if Serjeant Buzfuz had stopped this irregular cross-examination at the outset (which he knew better than to do ; observing Mr. Winkle's anxiety, and well knowing it would, in all probability, lead to something serviceable to him), this unfortunate admission would not have been elicited. The moment the words fell from Mr. Winkle's lips, Mr. Phunky sat down, and Serjeant Snubbin rather hastily told him he might leave the box, which Mr. Winkle prepared to do with great readiness, when Serjeant Buzfuz stopped him.

"Stay, Mr. Winkle, stay !" said Serjeant Buzfuz, "will your lordship have the goodness to ask him, what this one instance of suspicious behaviour towards females on the part of this gentleman, who is old enough to be his father, was ?"

"You hear what the learned counsel says, sir," observed

the judge, turning to the miserable and agonized Mr. Winkle. "Describe the occasion to which you refer."

"My lord," said Mr. Winkle, trembling with anxiety, "I—I'd rather not."

"Perhaps so," said the little judge; "but you must."

Amid the profound silence of the whole court, Mr. Winkle faltered out, that the trifling circumstance of suspicion was Mr. Pickwick's being found in a lady's sleeping apartment at midnight; which had terminated, he believed, in the breaking off of the projected marriage of the lady in question, and had led, he knew, to the whole party being forcibly carried before George Nupkins, Esq., magistrate and justice of the peace, for the borough of Ipswich!

"You may leave the box, sir," said Serjeant Snubbin. Mr. Winkle *did* leave the box, and rushed with delirious haste to the George and Vulture, where he was discovered some hours after, by the waiter, groaning in a hollow and dismal manner, with his head buried beneath the sofa cushions.

Tracy Tupman, and Augustus Snodgrass, were severally called into the box; both corroborated the testimony of their unhappy friend; and each was driven to the verge of desperation by excessive badgering.

Susannah Sanders was then called, and examined by Serjeant Buzfuz, and cross-examined by Serjeant Snubbin. Had always said and believed that Pickwick would marry Mrs. Bardell; knew that Mrs. Bardell's being engaged to Pickwick was the current topic of conversation in the neighbourhood, after the fainting in July; had been told it herself by Mrs. Mudberry which kept a mangle, and Mrs. Bunkin which clear-starched, but did not see either Mrs. Mudberry or Mrs. Bunkin in court. Had heard Pickwick ask the little boy how he should like to have another father. Did not know that Mrs. Bardell was at that time keeping company with the baker, but did know that the baker was then a single man and is now married. Couldn't swear that Mrs. Bardell was not very fond of the baker, but should think that the baker was not very fond of Mrs. Bardell, or he wouldn't have married somebody else. Thought Mrs. Bardell fainted away on the morning in July, because Pickwick asked her to name the day; knew that she (witness) fainted away stone dead when Mr. Sanders asked *her* to name the day, and believed that everybody as called herself a lady would do the same, under similar circumstances. Heard Pickwick ask the

boy the question about the marbles, but upon her oath did not know the difference between an alley tor and a commoney.

By the Court.—During the period of her keeping company with Mr. Sanders, had received love letters, like other ladies. In the course of their correspondence Mr. Sanders had often called her a “duck,” but never “chops,” nor yet “tomato sauce.” He was particularly fond of ducks. Perhaps if he had been as fond of chops and tomato sauce, he might have called her that, as a term of affection.

Serjeant Buzfuz now rose with more importance than he had yet exhibited, if that were possible, and vociferated: “Call Samuel Weller.”

It was quite unnecessary to call Samuel Weller; for Samuel Weller stepped briskly into the box the instant his name was pronounced; and placing his hat on the floor, and his arms on the rail, took a bird’s-eye view of the bar, and a comprehensive survey of the bench, with a remarkably cheerful and lively aspect.

“What’s your name, sir?” inquired the judge.

“Sam Weller, my lord,” replied that gentleman.

“Do you spell it with a ‘V’ or a ‘W?’” inquired the judge.

“That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my lord,” replied Sam; “I never had occasion to spell it more than once or twice in my life, but I spells it with a ‘V.’”

Here a voice in the gallery exclaimed aloud, “Quite right too, Samivel, quite right. Put it down a we, my lord, put it down a we.”

“Who is that, who dares to address the court?” said the little judge, looking up. “Usher.”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Bring that person here instantly.”

“Yes, my lord.”

But as the usher didn’t find the person, he didn’t bring him; and, after a great commotion, all the people who had got up to look for the culprit, sat down again. The little judge turned to the witness as soon as his indignation would allow him to speak, and said,

“Do you know who that was, sir?”

“I rayther suspect it was my father, my lord,” replied Sam.

“Do you see him here now?” said the judge.

“No, I don’t, my lord,” replied Sam, staring right up into the lantern in the roof of the court.

"If you could have pointed him out, I would have committed him instantly," said the judge.

Sam bowed his acknowledgments and turned, with unimpaired cheerfulness of countenance, towards Serjeant Buzfuz.

"Now, Mr. Weller," said Serjeant Buzfuz.

"Now, sir," replied Sam.

"I believe you are in the service of Mr. Pickwick, the defendant in this case. Speak up, if you please, Mr. Weller."

"I mean to speak up, sir," replied Sam; "I am in the service o' that 'ere gen'l'man, and a verry good service it is."

"Little to do, and plenty to get, I suppose?" said Serjeant Buzfuz, with jocularity.

"Oh, quite enough to get, sir, as the soldier said ven they ordered him three hundred and fifty lashes," replied Sam.

"You must not tell us what the soldier, or any other man, said, sir," interposed the judge; "it's not evidence."

"Wery good, my lord," replied Sam.

"Do you recollect anything particular happening on the morning when you were first engaged by the defendant; eh, Mr. Weller?" said Serjeant Buzfuz.

"Yes I do, sir," replied Sam.

"Have the goodness to tell the jury what it was."

"I had a reg'lar new fit out o' clothes that mornin', gen'l'men of the jury," said Sam, "and that was a verry partickler and uncommon circumstance with me in those days."

Hereupon there was a general laugh; and the little judge, looking with an angry countenance over his desk, said, "You had better be careful, sir."

"So Mr. Pickwick said at the time, my lord," replied Sam; "and I was verry careful o' that 'ere suit o' clothes; wery careful indeed, my lord."

The judge looked sternly at Sam for full two minutes, but Sam's features were so perfectly calm and serene that the judge said nothing, and motioned Serjeant Buzfuz to proceed.

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Weller," said Serjeant Buzfuz, folding his arms emphatically, and turning half-round to the jury, as if in mute assurance that he would bother the witness yet: "Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Weller, that you saw nothing of this fainting on the part of the plaintiff in the arms of the defendant, which you have heard described by the witnesses?"

"Certainly not," replied Sam. "I was in the passage 'till they called me up, and then the old lady was not there."

"Now, attend, Mr. Weller," said Serjeant Buzfuz, dipping a large pen into the inkstand before him, for the purpose of frightening Sam with a show of taking down his answer. "You were in the passage, and yet saw nothing of what was going forward. Have you a pair of eyes, Mr. Weller?"

"Yes, I have a pair of eyes," replied Sam, "and that's just it. If they wos a pair o' patent double million magnifyin' gas microscopes of hextra power, p'raps I might be able to see through a fligh o' stairs and a deal door; but bein' only eyes, you see, my wision's limited."

At this answer, which was delivered without the slightest appearance of irritation, and with the most complete simplicity and equanimity of manner, the spectators tittered, the little judge smiled, and Serjeant Buzfuz looked particularly foolish. After a short consultation with Dodson and Fogg, the learned Serjeant again turned towards Sam, and said, with a painful effort to conceal his vexation, "Now, Mr. Weller, I'll ask you a question on another point, if you please."

"If you please, sir," rejoined Sam, with the utmost good-humour.

"Do you remember going up to Mrs. Bardell's house, one night in November last?"

"Oh yes, very well."

"Oh, you *do* remember that, Mr. Weller," said Serjeant Buzfuz, recovering his spirits; "I thought we should get at something at last."

"I rayther thought that, too, sir," replied Sam; and at this the spectators tittered again.

"Well; I suppose you went up to have a little talk about this trial—eh, Mr. Weller?" said Serjeant Buzfuz, looking knowingly at the jury.

"I went up to pay the rent; but we *did* get a talkin' about the trial," replied Sam.

"Oh, you *did* get a talking about the trial," said Serjeant Buzfuz, brightening up with the anticipation of some important discovery. "Now what passed about the trial; will you have the goodness to tell us, Mr. Weller?"

"Vith all the pleasure in life, sir," replied Sam. "Arter a few unimportant obserwations from the two wirtuous females as has been examined here to-day, the ladies gets into a very great state o' admiration at the honourable conduct

of Mr. Dodson and Fogg—they two gen'l'men as is settin' near you now." This, of course, drew general attention to Dodson and Fogg, who looked as virtuous as possible.

"The attorneys for the plaintiff," said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz. "Well! They spoke in high praise of the honourable conduct of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, the attorneys for the plaintiff, did they?"

"Yes," said Sam, "they said what a very gen'rous thing it was o' them to have taken up the case on spec, and to charge nothing at all for costs, unless they got 'em out of Mr. Pickwick."

At this very unexpected reply, the spectators tittered again, and Dodson and Fogg, turning very red, leant over to Serjeant Buzfuz, and in a hurried manner whispered something in his ear.

"You are quite right," said Serjeant Buzfuz aloud, with affected composure. "It's perfectly useless, my lord, attempting to get at any evidence through the impenetrable stupidity of this witness. I will not trouble the court by asking him any more questions. Stand down, sir."

"Would any other gen'l'man like to ask me anythin'?" inquired Sam, taking up his hat, and looking round most deliberately.

"Not I, Mr. Weller, thank you," said Serjeant Snubbin, laughing.

"You may go down, sir," said Serjeant Buzfuz, waving his hand impatiently. Sam went down accordingly, after doing Messrs. Dodson and Fogg's case as much harm as he conveniently could, and saying just as little respecting Mr. Pickwick as might be, which was precisely the object he had had in view all along.

"I have no objection to admit, my lord," said Serjeant Snubbin, "if it will save the examination of another witness, that Mr. Pickwick has retired from business, and is a gentleman of considerable independent property."

"Very well," said Serjeant Buzfuz, putting in the two letters to be read, "Then that's my case, my lord."

Serjeant Snubbin then addressed the jury on behalf of the defendant; and a very long and a very emphatic address he delivered, in which he bestowed the highest possible eulogiums on the conduct and character of Mr. Pickwick; but inasmuch as our readers are far better able to form a correct estimate of that gentleman's merits and deserts, than Serjeant Snubbin

could possibly be, we do not feel called upon to enter at any length into the learned gentleman's observations. He attempted to show that the letters which had been exhibited, merely related to Mr. Pickwick's dinner, or to the preparations for receiving him in his apartments on his return from some country excursion. It is sufficient to add in general terms, that he did the best he could for Mr. Pickwick; and the best, as everybody knows, on the infallible authority of the old adage, could do no more.

Mr. Justice Stareleigh sun med up, in the old-established and most approved form. He read as much of his notes to the jury as he could decipher on so short a notice, and made running comments on the evidence as he went along. If Mrs. Bardell were right, it was perfectly clear that Mr. Pickwick was wrong, and if they thought the evidence of Mrs. Cluppins worthy of credence they would believe it, and, if they didn't, why they wouldn't. If they were satisfied that a breach of promise of marriage had been committed, they would find for the plaintiff with such damages as they thought proper; and if, on the other hand, it appeared to them that no promise of marriage had ever been given, they would find for the defendant with no damages at all. The jury then retired to their private room to talk the matter over, and the judge retired to *his* private room, to refresh himself with a mutton chop and a glass of sherry.

An anxious quarter of an hour elapsed; the jury came back; the judge was fetched in. Mr. Pickwick put on his spectacles, and gazed at the foreman with an agitated countenance and a quickly beating heart.

"Gentlemen," said the individual in black, "are you all agreed upon your verdict?"

"We are," replied the foreman.

"Do you find for the plaintiff, gentlemen, or for the defendant?"

"For the plaintiff."

"With what damages, gentlemen?"

"Seven hundred and fifty pounds."

Mr. Pickwick took off his spectacles, carefully wiped the glasses, folded them into their case, and put them in his pocket; then having drawn on his gloves with great nicety, and stared at the foreman all the while, he mechanically followed Mr. Perker and the blue bag out of court.

They stopped in a side room while Perker paid the court

fees ; and here, Mr. Pickwick was joined by his friends. Here, too, he encountered Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, rubbing their hands with every token of outward satisfaction.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, sir," said Dodson : for self and partner.

"You imagine you'll get your costs, don't you, gentlemen?" said Mr. Pickwick.

Fogg said they thought it rather probable. Dodson smiled, and said they'd try.

"You may try, and try, and try again, Messrs. Dodson and Fogg," said Mr. Pickwick vehemently, "but not one farthing of costs or damages do you ever get from me, if I spend the rest of my existence in a debtor's prison."

"Ha, ha !" laughed Dodson. "You'll think better of that, before next term, Mr. Pickwick."

"He, he, he ! We'll soon see about that, Mr. Pickwick," grinned Fogg.

Speechless with indignation, Mr. Pickwick allowed himself to be led by his solicitor and friends to the door, and there assisted into a hackney-coach, which had been fetched for the purpose, by the ever watchful Sam Weller.

Sam had put up the steps, and was preparing to jump upon the box, when he felt himself gently touched on the shoulder ; and looking round, his father stood before him. The old gentleman's countenance wore a mournful expression, as he shook his head gravely, and said, in warning accents :

"I know'd what 'ud come o' this here mode o' doin' bisness. Oh Sammy, Sammy, vy worn't there a alleybi !"

CHAPTER XXXV

IN WHICH MR. PICKWICK THINKS HE HAD BETTER GO TO
BATH; AND GOES ACCORDINGLY

"But surely, my dear sir," said little Perker, as he stood in Mr. Pickwick's apartment on the morning after the trial: "Surely you don't really mean—really and seriously now, and irritation apart—that you won't pay these costs and damages?"

"Not one halfpenny," said Mr. Pickwick, firmly; "not one halfpenny."

"Hooroar for the principle, as the money-lender said when he wouldn't renew the bill," observed Mr. Weller, who was clearing away the breakfast things.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "have the goodness to step down stairs."

"Cert'nly, sir," replied Mr. Weller; and acting on Mr. Pickwick's gentle hint, Sam retired.

"No, Perker," said Mr. Pickwick, with great seriousness of manner, "my friends here, have endeavoured to dissuade me from this determination, but without avail. I shall employ myself as usual, until the opposite party have the power of issuing a legal process of execution against me; and if they are vile enough to avail themselves of it, and to arrest my person, I shall yield myself up with perfect cheerfulness and content of heart. When can they do this?"

"They can issue execution, my dear sir, for the amount of the damages and taxed costs, next term," replied Perker, "just two months hence, my dear sir."

"Very good," said Mr. Pickwick. "Until that time, my dear fellow, let me hear no more of the matter. And now," continued Mr. Pickwick, looking round on his friends with a good-humoured smile, and a sparkle in the eye which no spectacles could dim or conceal, "the only question is, Where shall we go next?"

Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were too much affected by their friend's heroism to offer any reply. Mr Winkle had not yet sufficiently recovered the recollection of his evidence at the trial, to make any observation on any subject, so Mr. Pickwick paused in vain.

"Well," said that gentleman, "if you leave me to suggest our destination, I say Bath. I think none of us have ever been there."

Nobody had ; and as the proposition was warmly seconded by Perker, who considered it extremely probable that if Mr. Pickwick saw a little change and gaiety he would be inclined to think better of his determination, and worse of a debtor's prison, it was carried unanimously : and Sam was at once dispatched to the White Horse Cellar, to take five places by the half-past seven o'clock coach, next morning.

There were just two places to be had inside, and just three to be had out ; so Sam Weller booked for them all, and having exchanged a few compliments with the booking-office clerk on the subject of a pewter half-crown which was tendered him as a portion of his "change," walked back to the George and Vulture, where he was pretty busily employed until bedtime in reducing clothes and linen into the smallest possible compass, and exerting his mechanical genius in constructing a variety of ingenious devices for keeping the lids on boxes which had neither locks nor hinges.

The next was a very unpropitious morning for a journey—muggy, damp, and drizzly. The horses in the stages that were going out, and had come through the city, were smoking so, that the outside passengers were invisible. The newspaper-sellers looked moist, and smelt mouldy ; the wet ran off the hats of the orange-venders as they thrust their heads into the coach windows, and diluted the insides in a refreshing manner. The Jews with the fifty-bladed penknives shut them up in despair ; the men with the pocket-books made pocket-books of them. Watch-guards and toasting-forks were alike at a discount, and pencil-cases and sponge were a drug in the market.

Leaving Sam Weller to rescue the luggage from the seven or eight porters who flung themselves savagely upon it, the moment the coach stopped : and finding that they were about twenty minutes too early, Mr. Pickwick and his friends went for shelter into the travellers' room—the last resource of human dejection.

The travellers' room at the White Horse Cellar is of course uncomfortable ; it would be no travellers' room if it were not. It is the right-hand parlour, into which an aspiring kitchen fire-place appears to have walked, accompanied by a rebellious poker, tongs, and shovel. It is divided into boxes, for the solitary confinement of travellers, and is furnished with a clock, a looking-glass, and a live waiter : which latter article is kept in a small kennel for washing glasses, in a corner of the apartment.

One of these boxes was occupied, on this particular occasion, by a stern-eyed man of about five-and-forty, who had a band and glossy forehead, with a good deal of black hair at the sides and back of his head, and large black whiskers. He was buttoned up to the chin in a brown coat ; and had a large seal-skin travelling cap and a great-coat and cloak, lying on the seat beside him. He looked up from his breakfast as Mr. Pickwick entered, with a fierce and peremptory air, which was very dignified and having scrutinised that gentleman and his companions to his entire satisfaction, hummed a tune, in a manner which seemed to say that he rather suspected somebody wanted to take advantage of him, but it wouldn't do.

"Waiter," said the gentleman with the whiskers.

"Sir ?" replied a man with a dirty complexion, and a towel of the same, emerging from the kennel before mentioned.

"Some more toast."

"Yes, sir."

"Buttered toast, mind," said the gentleman, fiercely.

"D'rectly, sir," replied the waiter.

The gentleman with the whiskers hummed a tune in the same manner as before, and pending the arrival of the toast, advanced to the front of the fire, and, taking his coat tails under his arms, looked at his boots, and ruminated.

"I wonder whereabouts in Bath this coach puts up," said Mr. Pickwick, mildly addressing Mr. Winkle.

"Hum—eh—what's that ?" said the strange man.

"I made an observation to my friend, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, always ready to enter into conversation. "I wondered at what house the Bath coach put up. Perhaps you can inform me."

"Are you going to Bath ?" said the strange man.

"I am, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"And those other gentlemen ?"

"They are going also," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not inside—I'll be damned if you're going inside," said the strange man.

"Not all of us," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No, not all of you," said the strange man emphatically. "I've taken two places. If they try to squeeze six people into an infernal box that only holds four, I'll take a post-chaise and bring an action. I've paid my fare. It won't do; I told the clerk when I took my places that it wouldn't do. I know these things have been done. I know they are done every day; but *I* never was done, and I never will be. Those who know me best, best know it; crush me!" Here the fierce gentleman rang the bell with great violence, and told the waiter he'd better bring the toast in five seconds, or he'd know the reason why.

"My good sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "you will allow me to observe that this is a very unnecessary display of excitement. I have only taken places inside for two."

"I am glad to hear it," said the fierce man. "I withdraw my expressions. I tender an apology. There's my card. Give me your acquaintance."

"With great pleasure, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick. "We are to be fellow travellers, and I hope we shall find each other's society mutually agreeable."

"I hope we shall," said the fierce gentleman. "I know we shall. I like your looks; they please me. Gentlemen, your hands and names. Know me."

Of course, an interchange of friendly salutations followed this gracious speech; and the fierce gentleman immediately proceeded to inform the friends, in the same short, abrupt, jerking sentences, that his name was Dowler; that he was going to Bath on pleasure; that he was formerly in the army; that he had now set up in business as a gentleman; that he lived upon the profits; and that the individual for whom the second place was taken, was a personage no less illustrious than Mrs. Dowler his lady wife.

"She's a fine woman," said Mr. Dowler. "I am proud of her. I have reason."

"I hope I shall have the pleasure of judging," said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"You shall," replied Dowler. "She shall know you. She shall esteem you. I courted her under singular circumstances. I won her through a rash vow. Thus. I saw her; I loved

her ; I proposed ; she refused me.—‘You love another ?’—‘Spare my blushes.’—‘I know him.’—‘You do.’—‘Very good ; if he remains here, I’ll skin him.’”

“Lord bless me !” exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, involuntarily.

“Did you skin the gentleman, sir ?” inquired Mr. Winkle, with a very pale face.

“I wrote him a note. I said it was a painful thing. And so it was.”

“Certainly,” interposed Mr. Winkle.

“I said I had pledged my word as a gentleman to skin him. My character was at stake. I had no alternative. As an officer in His Majesty’s service, I was bound to skin him. I regretted the necessity, but it must be done. He was open to conviction. He saw that the rules of the service were imperative. He fled. I married her. Here’s the coach. That’s her head.”

As Mr. Dowler concluded, he pointed to a stage which had just driven up, from the open window of which a rather pretty face in a bright blue bonnet was looking among the crowd on the pavement : most probably for the rash man himself. Mr. Dowler paid his bill and hurried out with his travelling-cap, coat, and cloak ; and Mr. Pickwick and his friends followed to secure their places.

Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass had seated themselves at the back part of the coach ; Mr. Winkle had got inside ; and Mr. Pickwick was preparing to follow him, when Sam Weller came up to his master, and whispering in his ear, begged to speak to him, with an air of the deepest mystery.

“Well, Sam,” said Mr. Pickwick, “what’s the matter now ?”

“Here’s rayther a rum go, sir,” replied Sam.

“What ?” inquired Mr. Pickwick.

“This here, sir,” rejoined Sam. “I’m verry much afeerd, sir, that the propriiator o’ this here coach is a playin’ some impurence vith us.”

“How is that, Sam ?” said Mr. Pickwick ; “aren’t the names down on the way-bill ?”

“The names is not only down on the vay-bill, sir,” replied Sam, “but they’ve painted vun on ’em up, on the door o’ the coach.” As Sam spoke, he pointed to that part of the coach door on which the proprietor’s name usually appears ; and there, sure enough, in gilt letters of a goodly size, was the magic name of PICKWICK !

"Dear me," exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, quite staggered by the coincidence; "what a very extraordinary thing!"

"Yes, but that ain't all," said Sam, again directing his master's attention to the coach door; "not content with writin' up Pickwick, they puts 'Moses' afore it, vich I call addin' insult to injury, as the parrot said ven they not only took him from his native land, but made him talk the English langwidge arterwards."

"It's odd enough certainly, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick; "but if we stand talking here, we shall lose our places."

"Wot, ain't nothin' to be done in consequence, sir?" exclaimed Sam, perfectly aghast at the coolness with which Mr. Pickwick appeared to enconce himself inside.

"Done!" said Mr. Pickwick. "What should be done?"

"Ain't nobody to be whopped for takin' this here liberty, sir?" said Mr. Weller, who had expected that at least he would have been commissioned to challenge the guard and coachman to a pugilistic encounter on the spot.

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Pickwick eagerly; "not on any account. Jump up to your seat directly."

"I'm verry much afeerd," muttered Sam to himself, as he turned away, "that somethin' queer's come over the governor, or he'd never ha' stood this so quiet. I hope that 'ere trial hasn't broke his spirit, but it looks bad, verry bad." Mr. Weller shook his head gravely; and it is worthy of remark, as an illustration of the manner in which he took this circumstance to heart, that he did not speak another word until the coach reached the Kensington turnpike. Which was so long a time for him to remain taciturn, that the fact may be considered wholly unprecedented.

Nothing worthy of special mention occurred during the journey. Mr. Dowler related a variety of anecdotes, all illustrative of his own personal prowess and desperation, and appealed to Mrs. Dowler in corroboration thereof: when Mrs. Dowler invariably brought in, in the form of an appendix, some remarkable fact or circumstance which Mr. Dowler had forgotten, or had perhaps through modesty omitted: for the addenda in every instance went to show that Mr. Dowler was even a more wonderful fellow than he made himself out to be. Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle listened with great admiration, and at intervals conversed with Mrs. Dowler, who was a very agreeable and fascinating person. So, what between Mr. Dowler's stories, and

Mrs. Dowler's charms, and Mr. Pickwick's good humour, and Mr. Winkle's good listening, the insides contrived to be very companionable all the way.

The outsides did as outsides always do. They were very cheerful and talkative at the beginning of every stage, and very dismal and sleepy in the middle, and very bright and wakeful again towards the end. There was one young gentleman in an India-rubber cloak, who smoked cigars all day; and there was another young gentleman in a parody upon a great coat, who lighted a good many, and feeling obviously unsettled after the second whiff, threw them away when he thought nobody was looking at him. There was a third young man on the box who wished to be learned in cattle; and an old one behind who was familiar with farming. There was a constant succession of Christian names in smock frocks and white coats, who were invited to have a "lift" by the guard, and who knew every horse and hostler on the road and off it; and there was a dinner which would have been cheap at half-a-crown a mouth, if any moderate number of mouths could have eaten it in the time. And at seven o'clock p.m., Mr. Pickwick and his friends, and Mr. Dowler and his wife, respectively retired to their private sitting-rooms at the White Hart hotel, opposite the Great Pump Room, Bath, where the waiters, from their costume, might be mistaken for Westminster boys, only they destroy the illusion by behaving themselves much better.

Breakfast had scarcely been cleared away on the succeeding morning, when a waiter brought in Mr. Dowler's card, with a request to be allowed permission to introduce a friend. Mr. Dowler at once followed up the delivery of the card, by bringing himself and the friend also.

The friend was a charming young man of not much more than fifty, dressed in a very bright blue coat with resplendent buttons, black trousers, and the thinnest possible pair of highly-polished boots. A gold eye-glass was suspended from his neck by a short broad black ribbon; a gold snuff-box was lightly clasped in his left hand; gold rings innumerable, glittered on his fingers; and a large diamond pin set in gold glistened in his shirt frill. He had a gold watch, and a gold curb chain with large gold seals; and he carried a pliant ebony cane with a heavy gold top. His linen was of the very whitest, finest, and stiffest. His

wig of the glossiest, blackest, and curliest. His snuff was princes' mixture; his scent *bouquet du roi*. His features were contracted into a perpetual smile; and his teeth were in such perfect order that it was difficult at a small distance to tell the real from the false.

"Mr. Pickwick," said Mr. Dowler; "my friend, Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, M.C. Bantam; Mr. Pickwick. Know each other."

"Welcome to Ba—ath, sir. This is indeed an acquisition. Most welcome to Ba—ath, sir. It is long—very long, Mr. Pickwick, since you drank the waters. It appears an age, Mr. Pickwick. Re—markable!"

Such were the expressions with which Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, M.C., took Mr. Pickwick's hand; retaining it in his, meantime, and shrugging up his shoulders with a constant succession of bows, as if he really could not make up his mind to the trial of letting it go again.

"It is a very long time since I drank the waters, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick; "for to the best of my knowledge, I was never here before."

"Never in Ba—ath, Mr. Pickwick!" exclaimed the Grand Master, letting the hand fall in astonishment. "Never in Ba—ath! He! he! Mr. Pickwick, you are a wag. Not bad, not bad. Good, good. He! he! he! Re—markable!"

"To my shame, I must say that I am perfectly serious," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "I really never was here before."

"Oh, I see," exclaimed the Grand Master, looking extremely pleased: "Yes, yes—good, good—better and better. You are the gentleman of whom we have heard. Yes; we know you, Mr. Pickwick; we know you."

"The reports of the trial in those confounded papers," thought Mr. Pickwick. "They have heard all about me."

"You are the gentleman residing on Clapham Green," resumed Bantam, "who lost the use of his limbs from imprudently taking cold after port wine; who could not be moved in consequence of acute suffering, and who had the water from the King's Bath bottled at one hundred and three degrees, and sent by waggon to his bed-room in town, where he bathed, sneezed, and same day recovered. Very re—markable!"

Mr. Pickwick acknowledged the compliment which the supposition implied, but had the self-denial to repudiate it, notwithstanding; and taking advantage of a moment's

silence on the part of the M.C., begged to introduce his friends, Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass. An introduction which overwhelmed the M.C. with delight and honour.

"Bantam," said Mr. Dowler, "Mr. Pickwick and his friends are strangers. They must put their names down. Where's the book?"

"The register of the distinguished visitors in Ba—ath will be at the Pump Room this morning at two o'clock," replied the M.C. "Will you guide our friends to that splendid building, and enable me to procure their autographs?"

"I will," rejoined Dowler. "This is a long call. I's time to go. I shall be here again in an hour. Come."

"This is a ball night," said the M.C., again taking Mr. Pickwick's hand, as he rose to go. "The ball-nights in Ba—ath are moments snatched from Paradise; rendered bewitching by music, beauty, elegance, fashion, etiquette, and—and—above all, by the absence of tradespeople, who are quite inconsistent with Paradise; and who have an amalgamation of themselves at the Guildhall every fortnight, which is, to say the least, remarkable. Good bye, good bye!" and protesting all the way down stairs that he was most satisfied, and most delighted, and most overpowered, and most flattered, Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, M.C., stepped into a very elegant chariot that waited at the door, and rattled off.

At the appointed hour, Mr. Pickwick and his friends, escorted by Dowler, repaired to the Assembly Rooms, and wrote their names down in a book. An instance of condescension at which Angelo Bantam was even more overpowered than before. Tickets of admission to that evening's assembly were to have been prepared for the whole party, but as they were not ready, Mr. Pickwick undertook, despite all the protestations to the contrary of Angelo Bantam, to send Sam for them at four o'clock in the afternoon, to the M.C.'s house in Queen Square. Having taken a short walk through the city, and arrived at the unanimous conclusion that Park Street was very much like the perpendicular street a man sees in a dream, which he cannot get up for the life of him, they returned to the White Hart, and despatched Sam on the errand to which his master had pledged him.

Sam Weller put on his hat in a very easy and graceful manner, and thrusting his hands in his waistcoat pockets,

walked with great deliberation to Queen Square, whistling as he went along, several of the most popular airs of the day, as arranged with entirely new movements for that noble instrument the organ, either mouth or barrel. Arriving at the number in Queen Square to which he had been directed, he left off whistling, and gave a cheerful knock, which was instantaneously answered by a powdered-headed footman in gorgeous livery, and of symmetrical stature.

"Is this here Mr. Bantam's, old feller?" inquired Sam Weller, nothing abashed by the blaze of splendour which burst upon his sight, in the person of the powdered-headed footman with the gorgeous livery.

"Why, young man?" was the haughty inquiry of the powdered-headed footman.

"'Cos if it is, jist you step into him with that 'ere card, and say Mr. Veller's a waitin', will you?" said Sam. And saying it, he very coolly walked into the hall, and sat down.

The powdered-headed footman slammed the door very hard, and scowled very grandly; but both the slam and the scowl were lost upon Sam, who was regarding a mahogany umbrella stand with every outward token of critical approval.

Apparently, his master's reception of the card had impressed the powdered-headed footman in Sam's favour, for when he came back from delivering it, he smiled in a friendly manner, and said that the answer would be ready directly.

"Werry good," said Sam. "Tell the old gen'l'm'n not to put himself in a perspiration. No hurry, six-foot. I've had my dinner."

"You dine early, sir," said the powdered-headed footman.

"I find I gets on better at supper when I does," replied Sam.

"Have you been long in Bath, sir?" inquired the powdered-headed footman. "I have not had the pleasure of hearing of you before."

"I haven't created any wery surprisin' sensation here, as yet," rejoined Sam, "for me and the other fash'nables only come last night."

"Nice place, sir," said the powdered-headed footman.

"Seems so," observed Sam.

"Pleasant society, sir," remarked the powdered-headed footman. "Very agreeable servants, sir."

"I should think they wos," replied Sam. "Affable, unaffected, say-nothin'-to-nobody sort o' fellers."

"Oh, very much so, indeed, sir," said the powdered-headed footman, taking Sam's remark as a high compliment. "Very much so indeed. Do you do anything in this way, sir?" inquired the tall footman, producing a small snuff-box with a fox's head on the top of it.

"Not without sneezing," replied Sam.

"Why, it *is* difficult, sir, I confess," said the tall footman. "It may be done by degrees, sir. Coffee is the best practice. I carried coffee, sir, for a long time. It looks very like 'appee, sir.'"

Here, a sharp pull at the bell, reduced the powdered-headed footman to the ignominious necessity of putting the fox's head in his pocket, and hastening with a humble countenance to Mr. Bantam's "study." By the by, who ever knew a man who never read or wrote either, who hadn't got some small back parlour which he *would* call a study!

"There is the answer, sir," said the powdered-headed footman. "I am afraid you'll find it inconveniently large."

"Don't mention it," said Sam, taking a letter with a small enclosure. "It's just possible as exhausted nature may manage to survive it."

"I hope we shall meet again, sir," said the powdered-headed footman, rubbing his hands, and following Sam out to the door-step.

"You are wery obligin', sir," replied Sam. "Now, don't allow yourself to be fatigued beyond your powers; there's a amiable bein'. Consider what you owe to society, and don't let yourself be injured by too much work. For the sake o' your feller creeturs, keep your self as quiet as you can; only think what a loss you would be!" with these pathetic words, Sam Weller departed.

"A very singular young man that," said the powdered-headed footman, looking after Mr. Weller, with a countenance which clearly showed he could make nothing of him.

Sam said nothing at all. He winked, shook his head, smiled, winked again; and with an expression of countenance which seemed to denote that he was greatly amused with something or other, walked merrily away.

At precisely twenty minutes before eight o'clock that night, Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esq., the Master of the Ceremonies, emerged from his chariot at the door of the Assembly Rooms

in the same wig, the same teeth, the same eye-glass, the same watch and seals, the same rings, the same shirt-pin and the same cane. The only observable alterations in his appearance were, that he wore a brighter blue coat, with a white silk lining: black tights, black silk stockings, and pumps, and a white waistcoat, and was, if possible, just a thought more scented.

Thus attired, the Master of the Ceremonies, in strict discharge of the important duties of his all-important office, planted himself in the rooms to receive the company.

Bath being full, the company and the sixpences for tea, poured in, in shoals. In the ball-room, the long card-room, the octagonal card-room, the staircases, and the passages, the hum of many voices, and the sound of many feet, were perfectly bewildering. Dresses rustled, feathers waved, lights shone, and jewels sparkled. There was the music—not of the quadrille band, for it had not yet commenced; but the music of soft tiny footsteps, with now and then a clear merry laugh—low and gentle, but very pleasant to hear in a female voice, whether in Bath or elsewhere. Brilliant eyes, lighted up with pleasurable expectation, gleamed from every side; and look where you would, some exquisite form glided gracefully through the throng, and was no sooner lost, than it was replaced by another as dainty and bewitching.

In the tea-room, and hovering round the card-tables, were a vast number of queer old ladies and decrepid old gentlemen, discussing all the small talk and scandal of the day, with a relish and gusto which sufficiently bespoke the intensity of the pleasure they derived from the occupation. Mingled with these groups, were three or four matchmaking mammas, appearing to be wholly absorbed by the conversation in which they were taking part, but failing not from time to time to cast an anxious sidelong glance upon their daughters, who, remembering the maternal injunction to make the best use of their youth, had already commenced incipient flirtations in the mislaying of scarves, putting on gloves, setting down cups, and so forth; slight matters apparently, but which may be turned to surprisingly good account by expert practitioners.

Lounging near the doors, and in remote corners, were various knots of silly young men, displaying various varieties of puppyism and stupidity; amusing all sensible

people near them with their folly and conceit ; and happily thinking themselves the objects of general admiration. A wise and merciful dispensation which no good man will quarrel with.

And lastly, seated on some of the back benches, where they had already taken up their positions for the evening, were divers unmarried ladies past their grand climacteric, who, not dancing because there were no partners for them, and not playing cards lest they should be set down as irretrievably single, were in the favourable situation of being able to abuse everybody without reflecting on themselves. In short, they could abuse everybody, because everybody was there. It was a scene of gaiety, glitter, and show ; of richly-dressed people, handsome mirrors, chalked floors, girandoles, and wax-candles ; and in all parts of the scene, gliding from spot to spot in silent softness, bowing obsequiously to this party, nodding familiarly to that, and smiling complacently on all, was the sprucely attired person of Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, Master of the Ceremonies.

"Stop in the tea-room. Take your sixpenn'orth. They lay on hot water, and call it tea. Drink it," said Mr. Dowler, in a loud voice, directing Mr. Pickwick, who advanced at the head of the little party, with Mrs. Dowler on his arm. Into the tea-room Mr. Pickwick turned ; and catching sight of him, Mr. Bantam corkscrewed his way through the crowd, and welcomed him with ecstasy.

"My dear sir, I am highly honoured. Ba—ath is favoured. Mrs. Dowler, you embellish the rooms. I congratulate you on your feathers. Re—markable !"

"Anybody here ?" inquired Dowler, suspiciously.

"Anybody !" The *élite* of Ba—ath. Mr. Pickwick, do you see the lady in the gauze turban ?

"The fat old lady ?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, innocently.

"Hush, my dear sir—nobody's fat or old in Ba—ath. That's the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph."

"Is it indeed ?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"No less a person, I assure you," said the Master of the Ceremonies. "Hush. Draw a little nearer, Mr. Pickwick. You see the splendidly dressed young man coming this way ?"

"The one with the long hair, and the particularly small forehead ?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"The same. The richest young man in Ba—ath at this moment. Young Lord Mutanhed."

"You don't say so?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes. You'll hear his voice in a moment, Mr. Pickwick. He'll speak to me. The other gentleman with him, in the red under waistcoat and dark moustache, is the Honourable Mr. Crushton, his bosom friend. How do you do, my lord?"

"Veway hot, Bantam," said his lordship.

"It is very warm, my lord," replied the M.C.

"Confounded," assented the Honourable Mr. Crushton.

"Have you seen his lordship's mail cart, Bantam?" inquired the Honourable Mr. Crushton, after a short pause, during which young Lord Mutanhed had been endeavouring to stare Mr. Pickwick out of countenance, and Mr. Crushton had been reflecting what subject his lordship could talk about best.

"Dear me, no," replied the M.C. "A mail cart! What an excellent idea. Re—markable!"

"Gwacious heavens!" said his lordship, "I thought ewewebody had seen the new mail cart; it's the neatest, pwettiest, gwacefullest thing that ever wan upon wheels. Painted wed, with a cweam piebald."

"With a real box for the letters, and all complete," said the Honourable Mr. Crushton.

"And a little seat in fwont, with an iwon wail, for the dwiver," added his lordship. "I dwove it over to Bwistol the other morning, in a cwimson coat, with two servants widing a quarter of a mile behind; and confound me if the people didn't wush out of their cottages, and awest my pwogwess, to know if I wasn't the post. Glorwious, glorwious!"

At this anecdote his lordship laughed very heartily, as did the listeners, of course. Then, drawing his arm through that of the obsequious Mr. Crushton, Lord Mutanhed walked away.

"Delightful young man, his lordship," said the Master of the Ceremonies.

"So I should think," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, drily.

The dancing having commenced, the necessary introductions having been made, and all preliminaries arranged, Angelo Bantam rejoined Mr. Pickwick, and led him into the card-room.



THE CARD-ROOM AT BATH

Just at the very moment of their entrance, the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph and two other ladies of an ancient and whist-like appearance, were hovering over an unoccupied card-table; and they no sooner set eyes upon Mr. Pickwick under the convoy of Angelo Bantam, than they exchanged glances with each other, seeing that he was precisely the very person they wanted, to make up the rubber.

"My dear Bantam," said the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph, coaxingly, "find us some nice creature to make up this table; there's a good soul." Mr. Pickwick happened to be looking another way at the moment, so her ladyship nodded her head towards him, and frowned expressively.

"My friend Mr. Pickwick, my lady, will be most happy, I am sure, re—markably so," said the M.C., taking the hint. "Mr. Pickwick, Lady Snuphanuph—Mrs. Colonel Wugsby—Miss Bolo."

Mr. Pickwick bowed to each of the ladies, and, finding escape impossible, cut. Mr. Pickwick and Miss Bolo against Lady Snuphanuph and Mrs. Colonel Wugsby.

As the trump card was turned up, at the commencement of the second deal, two young ladies hurried into the room, and took their stations on either side of Mrs. Colonel Wugsby's chair, where they waited patiently until the hand was over.

"Now, Jane," said Mrs. Colonel Wugsby, turning to one of the girls, "what is it?"

"I came to ask, ma, whether I might dance with the youngest Mr. Crawley," whispered the prettier and younger of the two.

"Good God, Jane, how can you think of such things?" replied the mamma, indignantly. "Haven't you repeatedly heard that his father has eight hundred a-year, which dies with him? I am ashamed of you. Not on any account."

"Ma," whispered the other, who was much older than her sister, and very insipid and artificial, "Lord Mutanhed has been introduced to me. I said I *thought* I wasn't engaged, ma."

"You're a sweet pet, my love," replied Mrs. Colonel Wugsby, tapping her daughter's cheek with her fan, "and are always to be trusted. He's immensely rich, my dear. Bless you!" With these words Mrs. Colonel Wugsby kissed her eldest daughter most affectionately, and frowning in a warning manner upon the other, sorted her cards.

Poor Mr. Pickwick! he had never played with three

thorough-paced female card-players before. They were so desperately sharp, that they quite frightened him. If he played a wrong card, Miss Bolo looked a small armoury of daggers ; if he stopped to consider which was the right one, Lady Snuphanuph would throw herself back in her chair, and smile with a mingled glance of impatience and pity to Mrs. Colonel Wugsby ; at which Mrs. Colonel Wugsby would shrug up her shoulders, and cough, as much as to say she wondered whether he ever would begin. Then, at the end of every hand, Miss Bolo would inquire with a dismal countenance and reproachful sigh, why Mr. Pickwick had not returned that diamond, or led the club, or roughed the spade, or finessed the heart, or led through the honour, or brought out the ace, or played up to the king, or some such thing ; and in reply to all these grave charges, Mr. Pickwick would be wholly unable to plead any justification whatever, having by this time forgotten all about the game. People came and looked on, too, which made Mr. Pickwick nervous. Besides all this, there was a great deal of distracting conversation near the table, between Angelo Bantam and the two Miss Matinters, who, being single and singular, paid great court to the Master of the Ceremonies, in the hope of getting a stray partner now and then. All these things, combined with the noises and interruptions of constant comings in and goings out, made Mr. Pickwick play rather badly ; the cards were against him, also ; and when they left off at ten minutes past eleven, Miss Bolo rose from the table considerably agitated, and went straight home, in a flood of tears, and a sedan-chair.

Being joined by his friends, who one and all protested that they had scarcely ever spent a more pleasant evening, Mr. Pickwick accompanied them to the White Hart, and having soothed his feelings with something hot, went to bed, and to sleep, almost simultaneously.

CHAPTER XXXVI

TELLS OF A MOST EXTRAORDINARY CALAMITY THAT BEFELL MR. WINKLE

As Mr. Pickwick contemplated a stay of at least two months in Bath, he deemed it advisable to take private lodgings for himself and friends for that period; and as a favourable opportunity offered for their securing, on moderate terms, the upper portion of a house in the Royal Crescent, which was larger than they required, Mr. and Mrs. Dowler offered to relieve them of a bed-room and sitting-room. This proposition was at once accepted, and in three days' time they were all located in their new abode, when Mr. Pickwick began to drink the waters with the utmost assiduity. Mr. Pickwick took them systematically. He drank a quarter of a pint before breakfast, and then walked up a hill; and another quarter of a pint after breakfast, and then walked down a hill; and after every fresh quarter of a pint, Mr. Pickwick declared, in the most solemn and emphatic terms, that he felt a great deal better: whereat his friends were very much delighted, though they had not been previously aware that there was anything the matter with him.

The great pump-room is a spacious saloon, ornamented with Corinthian pillars, and a music gallery, and a Tompion clock, and a statue of Nash, and a golden inscription, to which all the water-drinkers should attend, for it appeals to them in the cause of a deserving charity. There is a large bar with a marble vase, out of which the pumper gets the water; and there are a number of yellow-looking tumblers, out of which the company get it; and it is a most edifying and satisfactory sight to behold the perseverance

and gravity with which they swallow it. There are baths near at hand, in which a part of the company wash themselves; and a band plays afterwards, to congratulate the remainder on their having done so. There is another pump-room, into which infirm ladies and gentlemen are wheeled, in such an astonishing variety of chairs and chaises, that any adventurous individual who goes in with the regular number of toes, is in imminent danger of coming out without them; and there is a third, into which the quiet people go, for it is less noisy than either. There is an immensity of promenading, on crutches and off, with sticks and without, and a great deal of conversation, and liveliness, and pleasantry.

Every morning, the regular water-drinkers, Mr. Pickwick among the number, met each other in the pump-room, took their quarter of a pint, and walked constitutionally. At the afternoon's promenade, Lord Muntanhed, and the Honourable Mr. Crushton, the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph, Mrs. Colonel Wugsby, and all the great people, and all the morning water-drinkers, met in grand assemblage. After this, they walked out, or drove out, or were pushed out in bath chairs, and met one another again. After this, the gentlemen went to the reading-rooms and met divisions of the mass. After this, they went home. If it were theatre night, perhaps they met at the theatre; if it were assembly night, they met at the rooms; and if it were neither, they met the next day. A very pleasant routine, with perhaps a slight tinge of sameness.

Mr. Pickwick was sitting up by himself, after a day spent in this manner, making entries in his journal: his friends having retired to bed: when he was roused by a gentle tap at the room door.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Mrs. Craddock, the landlady, peeping in; "but *did* you want anything more, sir?"

"Nothing more, ma'am," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"My young girl is gone to bed, sir," said Mrs. Craddock; "and Mr. Dowler is good enough to say that he'll sit up for Mrs. Dowler, as the party isn't expected to be over till late; so I was thinking if you wanted nothing more, Mr. Pickwick, I would go to bed."

"By all means, ma'am," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Wish you good night, sir," said Mrs. Craddock.

"Good night ma'am," rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

Mrs. Craddock closed the door, and Mr. Pickwick resumed his writing.

In half an hour's time the entries were concluded. Mr. Pickwick carefully rubbed the last page on the blotting-paper, shut up the book, wiped his pen on the bottom of the inside of his coat tail, and opened the drawer of the inkstand to put it carefully away: and then, with a countenance expressive of the utmost weariness, lighted his chamber candle, and went up stairs to bed.

He stopped at Mr. Dowler's door, according to custom, and knocked to say good night

"Ah!" said Dowler, "going to bed? I wish I was. Dismal night. Windy; isn't it?"

"Very," said Mr. Pickwick. "Good night."

"Good night."

Mr. Pickwick went to his bed-chamber, and Mr. Dowler resumed his seat before the fire, in fulfilment of his rash promise to sit up till his wife came home.

There are few things more worrying than sitting up for somebody, especially if that somebody be at a party. You cannot help thinking how quickly the time passes with them, which drags so heavily with you; and the more you think of this, the more your hopes of their speedy arrival decline. Clocks tick so loud, too, when you are sitting up alone, and you seem as if you had an under garment of cobwebs on. First, something tickles your right knee, and then the same sensation irritates your left. You have no sooner changed your position, than it comes again in the arms; when you have fidgeted your limbs into all sorts of odd shapes, you have a sudden relapse in the nose, which you rub as if to rub it off—as there is no doubt you would, if you could. Eyes, too, are mere personal inconveniences; and the wick of one candle gets an inch and a half long, while you are snuffing the other. These, and various other little nervous annoyances, render sitting up for a length of time after everybody else has gone to bed, anything but a cheerful amusement.

This was just Mr. Dowler's opinion, as he sat before the fire, and felt honestly indignant with all the inhuman people at the party who were keeping him up. He was not put into better humour either, by the reflection that he had taken it into his head, early in the evening, to think he had got an

ache there, and so stopped at home. At length, after several droppings asleep, and fallings forward towards the bars, and catchings backward soon enough to prevent being branded in the face, Mr. Dowler made up his mind that he would throw himself on the bed in the back-room and *think*—not sleep, of course.

“I’m a heavy sleeper,” said Mr. Dowler, as he flung himself on the bed. “I must keep awake. I suppose I shall hear a knock here. Yes. I thought so. I can hear the watchman. There he goes. Fainter now though. A little fainter. He’s turning the corner. Ah!” When Mr. Dowler arrived at this point, *he* turned the corner at which he had been long hesitating, and fell fast asleep.

Just as the clock struck three, there was blown into the crescent a sedan-chair with Mrs. Dowler inside, borne by one short fat chairman, and one long thin one, who had had much ado to keep their bodies perpendicular: to say nothing of the chair. But on that high ground, and in the crescent, which the wind swept round and round as if it were going to tear the paving stones up, its fury was tremendous. They were very glad to set the chair down, and give a good round loud double-knock at the street door.

They waited some time, but nobody came.

“Servants is in the arms o’ Porpus, I think,” said the short chairman, warming his hands at the attendant link-boy’s torch.

“I wish he’d give ’em a squeeze and wake ’em,” observed the long one.

“Knock again, will you, if you please,” cried Mrs. Dowler from the chair. “Knock two or three times, if you please.”

The short man was quite willing to get the job over, as soon as possible; so he stood on the step, and gave four or five most startling double knocks, of eight or ten knocks a piece: while the long man went into the road, and looked up at the windows for a light.

Nobody came. It was all as silent and dark as ever.

“Dear me!” said Mrs. Dowler. “You must knock again, if you please.”

“There ain’t a bell, is there, ma’am?” said the short chairman.

“Yes, there is,” interposed the link-boy, “I’ve been a ringing at it ever so long.”

“It’s only a handle,” said Mrs. Dowler, “the wire’s broken.”

"I wish the servants' heads wos," growled the long man.

"I must trouble you to knock again, if you please," said Mrs. Dowler with the utmost politeness.

The short man did knock again several times, without producing the smallest effect. The tall man, growing very impatient, then relieved him, and kept on perpetually knocking double-knocks of two loud knocks each, like an insane postman.

At length Mr. Winkle began to dream that he was at a club, and that the members being very refractory, the chairman was obliged to hammer the table a good deal to preserve order; then, he had a confused notion of an auction room where there were no bidders, and the auctioneer was buying everything in; and ultimately he began to think it just within the bounds of possibility that somebody might be knocking at the street door. To make quite certain, however, he remained quiet in bed for ten minutes or so, and listened; and when he had counted two or three and thirty knocks, he felt quite satisfied, and gave himself a great deal of credit for being so wakeful.

"Rap rap—rap rap—rap rap—ra, ra, ra, ra, rap!" went the knocker.

Mr. Winkle jumped out of bed, wondering very much what could possibly be the matter, and hastily putting on his stockings and slippers, folded his dressing gown round him, lighted a flat candle from the rush-light that was burning in the fire-place, and hurried down stairs.

"Here's somebody comin' at last, ma'am," said the short chairman.

"I wish I wos behind him with a bradawl," muttered the long one.

"Who's there?" cried Mr. Winkle, undoing the chain.

"Don't stop to ask questions, cast-iron head," replied the long man, with great disgust, taking it for granted that the inquirer was a footman; "but open the door."

"Come, look sharp, timber eye-lids," added the other encouragingly.

Mr. Winkle, being half asleep, obeyed the command mechanically, opened the door a little, and peeped out. The first thing he saw, was the red glare of the link-boy's torch. Startled by the sudden fear that the house might be on fire, he hastily threw the door wide open, and holding the candle above his head, stared eagerly before him, not quite certain

whether what he saw was a sedan-chair or a fire-engine. At this instant there came a violent gust of wind ; the light was blown out ; Mr. Winkle felt himself irresistibly impelled on to the steps ; and the door blew to, with a loud crash.

"Well, young man, now you *have* done it !" said the short chairman.

Mr. Winkle, catching sight of a lady's face at the window of the sedan, turned hastily round, plied the knocker with all his might and main, and called frantically upon the chairman to take the chair away again.

"Take it away, take it away," cried Mr. Winkle. "Here's somebody coming out of another house ; put me into the chair. Hide me ! Do something with me !"

All this time he was shivering with cold ; and every time he raised his hand to the knocker, the wind took the dressing gown in a most unpleasant manner.

"The people are coming down the Crescent now. There are ladies with 'em ; cover me up with something. Stand before me !" roared Mr. Winkle. But the chairmen were too much exhausted with laughing to afford him the slightest assistance, and the ladies were every moment approaching nearer and nearer.

Mr. Winkle gave a last hopeless knock ; the ladies were only a few doors off. He threw away the extinguished candle, which, all this time, he had held above his head, and fairly bolted into the sedan-chair where Mrs. Dowler was.

Now, Mrs. Craddock had heard the knocking and the voices at last ; and, only waiting to put something smarter on her head than her night-cap, ran down into the front drawing-room to make sure that it was the right party. Throwing up the window-sash as Mr. Winkle was rushing into the chair, she no sooner caught sight of what was going forward below, than she raised a vehement and dismal shriek, and implored Mr. Dowler to get up directly, for his wife was running away with another gentleman.

Upon this Mr. Dowler bounced off the bed as abruptly as an India-rubber ball, and rushing into the front room, arrived at one window just as Mr. Pickwick threw up the other : when the first object that met the gaze of both, was Mr. Winkle bolting into the sedan-chair.

"Watchman," shouted Dowler furiously ; "stop him—hold him—keep him tight—shut him in, till I come down. I'll cut his throat—give me a knife—from ear to ear.



MR. WINKLE'S SITUATION WHEN THE DOOR "BLEW TO"

Mrs. Craddock—"I will!" And breaking from the shrieking landlady, and from Mr. Pickwick, the indignant husband seized a small supper-knife, and tore into the street.

But Mr. Winkle didn't wait for him. He no sooner heard the horrible threat of the valorous Dowler, than he bounced out of the sedan, quite as quickly as he had bounced in, and throwing off his slippers into the road, took to his heels and tore round the Crescent, hotly pursued by Dowler and the watchman. He kept ahead the door was open as he came round the second time; he rushed in, slammed it in Dowler's face, mounted to his bed-room, locked the door, piled a wash-hand-stand, chest of drawers, and table against it, and packed up a few necessaries ready for flight with the first ray of morning.

Dowler came up to the outside of the door; avowed, through the keyhole, his steadfast determination of cutting Mr. Winkle's throat next day; and, after a great confusion of voices in the drawing-room, amidst which that of Mr. Pickwick was distinctly heard endeavouring to make peace, the inmates dispersed to their several bed-chambers, and all was quiet once more.

At a much earlier hour next morning than his usual time of rising, Mr. Pickwick walked down stairs completely dressed, and rang the bell.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, when Mr. Weller appeared in reply to the summons, "shut the door."

Mr. Weller did so.

"There was an unfortunate occurrence here, last night, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "which gave Mr. Winkle some cause to apprehend violence from Mr. Dowler."

"So I've heard from the old lady down stairs, sir," replied Sam.

"And I'm sorry to say, Sam," continued Mr. Pickwick, with a most perplexed countenance, "that in dread of this violence, Mr. Winkle has gone away."

"Gone away!" said Sam.

"Left the house early this morning, without the slightest previous communication with me," replied Mr. Pickwick. "And is gone, I know not where."

"He should ha' stopped and fought it out, sir," replied Sam, contemptuously. "It wouldn't take much to settle that 'ere Dowler, sir."

"Well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "I may have my doubts

of his great bravery and determination, also. But however that may be, Mr. Winkle is gone. He must be found, Sam. Found and brought back to me."

"And s'pose he won't come back, sir?" said Sam.

"He must be made, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Who's to do it, sir?" inquired Sam with a smile.

"You," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Wery good, sir."

With these words Mr. Weller left the room, and immediately afterwards was heard to shut the street door. In two hours' time he returned with as much coolness as if he had been despatched on the most ordinary message possible, and brought the information that an individual, in every respect answering Mr. Winkle's description, had gone over to Bristol that morning, by the branch coach from the Royal Hotel.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, grasping his hand, "you're a capital fellow; an invaluable fellow. You must follow him, Sam."

"Cert'nly, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"The instant you discover him, write to me immediately, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "If he attempts to run away from you, knock him down, or lock him up. You have my full authority, Sam."

"I'll be wery careful, sir," rejoined Sam.

"You'll tell him," said Mr. Pickwick, "that I am highly excited, highly displeased, and naturally indignant, at the very extraordinary course he has thought proper to pursue."

"I will, sir," replied Sam.

"You'll tell him," said Mr. Pickwick, "that if he does not come back to this very house, with you, he will come back with me, for I will come and fetch him."

"I'll mention that 'ere, sir," rejoined Sam.

"You think you can find him, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking earnestly in his face.

"Oh, I'll find him if he's any vere," rejoined Sam, with great confidence.

"Very well," said Mr. Pickwick. "Then the sooner you go the better."

With these instructions, Mr. Pickwick placed a sum of money in the hands of his faithful servitor, and ordered him to start for Bristol immediately, in pursuit of the fugitive.

Sam put a few necessaries in a carpet bag, and was ready for starting. He stopped when he had got to the end of the

passage, and walking quietly back, thrust his head in at the parlour door.

"Sir," whispered Sam.

"Well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I fully understands my instructions, do I, sir?" inquired Sam.

"I hope so," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It's reg'larly understood about the knockin' down, is it, sir?" inquired Sam.

"Perfectly," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Thoroughly. Do what you think necessary. You have my orders."

Sam gave a nod of intelligence, and withdrawing his head from the door, set forth on his pilgrimage with a light heart.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HOW MR. WINKLE, WHEN HE STEPPED OUT OF THE
FRYING-PAN, WALKED GENTLY AND COMFORTABLY
INTO THE FIRE

THE ill-starred gentleman who had been the unfortunate cause of the unusual noise and disturbance which alarmed the inhabitants of the Royal Crescent in manner and form already described, after passing a night of great confusion and anxiety, left the roof beneath which his friends still slumbered, bound he knew not whither. The excellent and considerate feelings which prompted Mr. Winkle to take this step can never be too highly appreciated or too warmly extolled. "If," reasoned Mr. Winkle with himself, "if this Dowler attempts (as I have no doubt he will) to carry into execution his threat of personal violence against myself, it will be incumbent on me to call him out. He has a wife; that wife is attached to, and dependent on him. Heavens! If I should kill him in the blindness of my wrath, what would be my feelings ever afterwards!" This painful consideration operated so powerfully on the feelings of the humane young man, as to cause his knees to knock together, and his countenance to exhibit alarming manifestations of inward emotion. Impelled by such reflections, he grasped his carpet-bag, and creeping stealthily down stairs, shut the detestable street-door with as little noise as possible, and walked off. Bending his steps towards the Royal Hotel, he found a coach on the point of starting for Bristol, and, thinking Bristol as good a place for his purpose as any other he could go to, he mounted the box, and reached his place of destination in such time as the pair of horses, who went the whole stage and back again twice a day or more, could be reasonably supposed to arrive there.

He took up his quarters at The Bush, and, designing to postpone any communication by letter with Mr. Pickwick

until it was probable that Mr. Dowler's wrath might have in some degree evaporated, walked forth to view the city, which struck him as being a shade more dirty than any place he had ever seen. Having inspected the docks and shipping, and viewed the cathedral, he inquired his way to Clifton, and being directed thither, took the route which was pointed out to him. But, as the pavements of Bristol are not the widest or cleanest upon earth, so its streets are not altogether the straightest or least intricate; Mr. Winkle being greatly puzzled by their manifold windings and twistings, looked about him for a decent shop in which he could apply afresh, for counsel and instruction.

His eye fell upon a newly painted tenement which had been recently converted into something between a shop and a private-house, and which a red lamp, projecting over the fan-light of the street-door, would have sufficiently announced as the residence of a medical practitioner, even if the word "Surgery" had not been inscribed in golden characters on a wainscot ground, above the window of what, in times bygone, had been the front parlour. Thinking this an eligible place wherein to make his inquiries, Mr. Winkle stepped into the little shop where the gilt-labelled drawers and bottles were; and finding nobody there, knocked with a half-crown on the counter, to attract the attention of anybody who might happen to be in the back parlour, which he judged to be the innermost and peculiar sanctum of the establishment, from the repetition of the word surgery on the door—painted in white letters this time, by way of taking off the monotony.

At the first knock, a sound, as of persons fencing with fire-irons, which had until now been very audible, suddenly ceased; at the second, a studious-looking young gentleman in green spectacles, with a very large book in his hand, glided quietly into the shop, and stepping behind the counter, requested to know the visitor's pleasure.

"I am sorry to trouble you, sir," said Mr. Winkle, "but will you have the goodness to direct me to——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the studious young gentleman, throwing the large book up into the air, and catching it with great dexterity at the very moment when it threatened to smash to atoms all the bottles on the counter. "Here's a start!"

There was, without doubt; for Mr. Winkle was so very

much astonished at the extraordinary behaviour of the medical gentleman, that he involuntarily retreated towards the door, and looked very much disturbed at his strange reception.

"What, don't you know me?" said the medical gentleman.

Mr. Winkle murmured, in reply, that he had not that pleasure.

"Why, then," said the medical gentleman, "there are hopes for me yet; I may attend half the old women in Bristol if I've decent luck. Get out, you mouldy old villain, get out!" With this adjuration, which was addressed to the large book, the medical gentleman kicked the volume with remarkable agility to the further end of the shop, and, pulling off his green spectacles, grinned the identical grin of Robert Sawyer, Esquire, formerly of Guy's Hospital in the Borough, with a private residence in Lant Street.

"You don't mean to say you weren't down upon me!" said Mr. Bob Sawyer, shaking Mr. Winkle's hand with friendly warmth.

"Upon my word I was not," replied Mr. Winkle, returning the pressure.

"I wonder you didn't see the name," said Bob Sawyer, calling his friend's attention to the outer door, on which, in the same white paint, were traced the words "Sawyer, late Nockemorf."

"It never caught my eye," returned Mr. Winkle.

"Lord, if I had known who you were, I should have rushed out, and caught you in my arms," said Bob Sawyer; "but upon my life, I thought you were the King's-taxes."

"No!" said Mr. Winkle.

"I did, indeed," responded Bob Sawyer, "and I was just going to say that I wasn't at home, but if you'd leave a message I'd be sure to give it to myself; for he don't know me; no more does the Lighting and Paving. I think the Church-rates guesses who I am, and I know the Water-works does, because I drew a tooth of his when I first came down here. But come in, come in!" Chattering in this way, Mr. Bob Sawyer pushed Mr. Winkle into the back room, where, amusing himself by boring little circular caverns in the chimney-piece with a red-hot poker, sat no less a person than Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"Well!" said Mr. Winkle. "This is indeed a pleasure

I did not expect. What a very nice place you have here!"

"Pretty well, pretty well," replied Bob Sawyer. "I *passed*, soon after that precious party, and my friends came down with the needful for this business; so I put on a black suit of clothes, and a pair of spectacles, and came here to look as solemn as I could."

"And a very snug little business you have, no doubt?" said Mr. Winkle, knowingly.

"Very," replied Bob Sawyer. "So snug, that at the end of a few years you might put all the profits in a wine glass, and cover 'em over with a gooseberry leaf."

"You cannot surely mean that?" said Mr. Winkle. "The stock itself—"

"Dummies, my dear boy," said Bob Sawyer; "half the drawers have nothing in 'em, and the other half don't open."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Winkle.

"Fact—honour!" returned Bob Sawyer, stepping out into the shop, and demonstrating the veracity of the assertion by divers hard pulls at the little gilt knobs on the counterfeited drawers. "Hardly anything real in the shop but the leeches, and *they* are second-hand."

"I shouldn't have thought it!" exclaimed Mr. Winkle, much surprised.

"I hope not," replied Bob Sawyer, "else where's the use of appearances, eh? But what will you take? Do as we do? That's right. Ben, my fine fellow, put your hand into the cupboard, and bring out the patent digester."

Mr. Benjamin Allen smiled his readiness, and produced from the closet at his elbow a black bottle half full of brandy.

"You don't take water, of course?" said Bob Sawyer.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Winkle. "It's *rather* early. I should like to qualify it, if you have no objection."

"None in the least, if you can reconcile it to your conscience," replied Bob Sawyer; tossing off, as he spoke, a glass of the liquor with great relish. "Ben, the pipkin!"

Mr. Benjamin Allen drew forth, from the same hiding-place, a small brass pipkin, which Bob Sawyer observed he prided himself upon, particularly because it looked so business-like. The water in the professional pipkin having been made to boil, in course of time, by various little shovelsfull

of coal, which Mr. Bob Sawyer took out of a practicable window-seat, labelled "Soda Water," Mr. Winkle adulterated his brandy; and the conversation was becoming general, when it was interrupted by the entrance into the shop of a boy, in a sober grey livery and a gold-laced hat, with a small covered basket under his arm: whom Mr. Bob Sawyer immediately hailed with, "Tom, you vagabond, come here."

The boy presented himself accordingly.

"You've been stopping to over all the posts in Bristol, you idle young scamp!" said Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"No, sir, I haven't," replied the boy.

"You had better not!" said Mr. Bob Sawyer, with a threatening aspect. "Who do you suppose will ever employ a professional man, when they see his boy playing at marbles in the gutter, or flying the garter in the horse-road? Have you no feeling for your profession, you groveller? Did you leave all the medicine?"

"Yes, sir."

"The powders for the child, at the large house with the new family, and the pills to be taken four times a day at the ill-tempered old gentleman's with the gouty leg?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then shut the door, and mind the shop."

"Come," said Mr. Winkle, as the boy retired, "things are not quite so bad as you would have me believe, either. There is *some* medicine to be sent out."

Mr. Bob Sawyer peeped into the shop to see that no stranger was within hearing, and leaning forward to Mr. Winkle, said, in a low tone:

"He leaves it all at the wrong houses."

Mr. Winkle looked perplexed, and Bob Sawyer and his friend laughed.

"Don't you see?" said Bob. "He goes up to a house, rings the area bell, pokes a packet of medicine without a direction into the servant's hand, and walks off. Servant takes it into the dining-parlour; master opens it, and reads the label: 'Draught to be taken at bed-time—pills as before—lotion as usual—the powder. From Sawyer's, late Nockem-*or*'s. Physicians' prescriptions carefully prepared,' and all the rest of it. Shows it to his wife—*she* reads the label; it goes down to the servants—*they* read the label. Next day, boy calls: 'Very sorry—his mistake—immense business—

great many parcels to deliver—Mr. Sawyer's compliments—late Nockemorf.' The name gets known, and that's the thing, my boy, in the medical way. Bless your heart, old fellow, it's better than all the advertising in the world. We have got one four-ounce bottle that's been to half the houses in Bristol, and hasn't done yet."

"Dear me, I see," observed Mr. Winkle; "what an excellent plan!"

"Oh, Ben and I have hit upon a dozen such," replied Bob Sawyer, with great glee. "The lamplighter has eighteenpence a week to pull the night-bell for ten minutes every time he comes round; and my boy always rushes into church, just before the psalms, when the people have got nothing to do but look about 'em, and calls me out, with horror and dismay depicted on his countenance. 'Bless my soul,' everybody says, 'somebody taken suddenly ill! Sawyer, late Nockemorf, sent for. What a business that young man has!'"

At the termination of this disclosure of some of the mysteries of medicine, Mr. Bob Sawyer and his friend, Ben Allen, threw themselves back in their respective chairs, and laughed boisterously. When they had enjoyed the joke to their hearts' content, the discourse changed to topics in which Mr. Winkle was more immediately interested.

We think we have hinted elsewhere, that Mr. Benjamin Allen had a way of becoming sentimental after brandy. The case is not a peculiar one, as we ourself can testify: having, on a few occasions, had to deal with patients who have been afflicted in a similar manner. At this precise period of his existence, Mr. Benjamin Allen had perhaps a greater predisposition to maudlinism than he had ever known before; the cause of which malady was briefly this. He had been staying nearly three weeks with Mr. Bob Sawyer; Mr. Bob Sawyer was not remarkable for temperance, nor was Mr. Benjamin Allen for the ownership of a very strong head; the consequence was, that, during the whole space of time just mentioned, Mr. Benjamin Allen had been wavering between intoxication partial, and intoxication complete.

"My dear friend," said Mr. Ben Allen, taking advantage of Mr. Bob Sawyer's temporary absence behind the counter, whither he had retired to dispense some of the second-hand leeches, previously referred to: "my dear friend, I am very miserable."

Mr. Winkle professed his heartfelt regret to hear it, and

begged to know whether he could do anything to alleviate the sorrows of the suffering student.

"Nothing, my dear boy, nothing," said Ben. "You recollect Arabella, Winkle? My sister Arabella—a little girl, Winkle, with black eyes—when we were down at Wardle's? I don't know whether you happened to notice her, a nice little girl, Winkle. Perhaps my features may recall her countenance to your recollection?"

Mr. Winkle required nothing to recall the charming Arabella to his mind; and it was rather fortunate he did not, for the features of her brother Benjamin would unquestionably have proved but an indifferent refresher to his memory. He answered, with as much calmness as he could assume, that he perfectly remembered the young lady referred to, and sincerely trusted she was in good health.

"Our friend Bob is a delightful fellow, Winkle," was the only reply of Mr. Ben Allen.

"Very," said Mr. Winkle; not much relishing this close connexion of the two names.

"I designed 'em for each other; they were made for each other, sent into the world for each other, born for each other, Winkle," said Mr. Ben Allen, setting down his glass with emphasis. "There's a special destiny in the matter, my dear sir; there's only five years' difference between 'em, and both their birthdays are in August."

Mr. Winkle was too anxious to hear what was to follow, to express much wonderment at this extraordinary coincidence, marvellous as it was; so Mr. Ben Allen, after a tear or two, went on to say, that, notwithstanding all his esteem and respect and veneration for his friend, Arabella had unaccountably and undutifully evinced the most determined antipathy to his person.

"And I think," said Mr. Ben Allen, in conclusion, "*I* think there's a prior attachment."

"Have you any idea who the object of it might be?" asked Mr. Winkle, with great trepidation.

Mr. Ben Allen seized the poker, flourished it in a warlike manner above his head, inflicted a savage blow on an imaginary skull, and wound up by saying, in a very expressive manner, that he only wished he could guess; that was all.

"I'd show him what I thought of him," said Mr. Ben Allen. And round went the poker again, more fiercely than before.

All this was, of course, very soothing to the feelings of Mr. Winkle, who remained silent for a few minutes ; but at length mustered up resolution to inquire whether Miss Allen was in Kent.

"No, no," said Mr. Ben Allen, laying aside the poker, and looking very cunning ; "I didn't think Wardle's exactly the place for a headstrong girl ; so, as I am her natural protector and guardian, our parents being dead, I have brought her down into this part of the country to spend a few months at an old aun's, in a nice dull close place. I think that will cure her, my boy. If it doesn't, I'll take her abroad for a little while, and see what that'll do."

"Oh, the aunt's is in Bristol, is it?" faltered Mr. Winkle.

"No, no, not in Bristol," replied Mr. Ben Allen, jerking his thumb over his right shoulder : "over that way ; down there. But, hush, here's Bob Not a word, my dear friend, not a word."

Short as this conversation was, it roused in Mr. Winkle the highest degree of excitement and anxiety. The suspected prior attachment rankled in his heart. Could he be the object of it ? Could it be for him that the fair Arabella had looked scornfully on the sprightly Bob Sawyer, or had he a successful rival ? He determined to see her, cost what it might ; but here an insurmountable objection presented itself, for whether the explanatory "over that way," and "down there," of Mr. Ben Allen, meant three miles off, or thirty, or three hundred, he could in no wise guess.

But he had no opportunity of pondering over his love just then, for Bob Sawyer's return was the immediate precursor of the arrival of a meat pie from the baker's, of which that gentleman insisted on his staying to partake. The cloth was laid by an occasional charwoman, who officiated in the capacity of Mr. Bob Sawyer's housekeeper ; and a third knife and fork having been borrowed from the mother of the boy in the grey livery (for Mr. Sawyer's domestic arrangements were as yet conducted on a limited scale), they sat down to dinner ; the beer being served up, as Mr. Sawyer remarked, "in it's native pewter."

After dinner, Mr. Bob Sawyer ordered in the largest mortar in the shop, and proceeded to brew a reeking jorum of rum-punch therein : stirring up and amalgamating the materials with a pestle in a very creditable and apothecary-

cary-like manner. Mr. Sawyer, being a bachelor, had only one tumbler in the house, which was assigned to Mr. Winkle as a compliment to the visitor : Mr. Ben Allen being accommodated with a funnel with a cork in the narrow end : and Bob Sawyer contented himself with one of those wide-lipped crystal vessels inscribed with a variety of cabalistic characters, in which chemists are wont to measure out their liquid drugs in compounding prescriptions. These preliminaries adjusted, the punch was tasted, and pronounced excellent ; and it having been arranged that Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen should be considered at liberty to fill twice to Mr. Winkle's once, they started fair, with great satisfaction and good-fellowship.

There was no singing, because Mr. Bob Sawyer said it wouldn't look professional ; but to make amends for this deprivation there was so much talking and laughing that it might have been heard, and very likely was, at the end of the street. Which conversation materially lightened the hours and improved the mind of Mr. Bob Sawyer's boy, who, instead of devoting the evening to his ordinary occupation of writing his name on the counter, and rubbing it out again, peeped through the glass door, and thus listened and looked on at the same time.

The mirth of Mr. Bob Sawyer was rapidly ripening into the furious ; Mr. Ben Allen was fast relapsing into the sentimental, and the punch had well-nigh disappeared altogether, when the boy hastily running in, announced that a young woman had just come over, to say that Sawyer late Nockemorf was wanted directly, a couple of streets off. This broke up the party. Mr. Bob Sawyer, understanding the message, after some twenty repetitions, tied a wet cloth round his head to sober himself, and, having partially succeeded, put on his green spectacles and issued forth. Resisting all entreaties to stay till he came back, and finding it quite impossible to engage Mr. Ben Allen in any intelligible conversation on the subject nearest his heart, or indeed on any other, Mr. Winkle took his departure, and returned to the Bush.

The anxiety of his mind, and the numerous meditations which Arabella had awakened, prevented his share of the mortar of punch producing that effect upon him which it would have had, under other circumstances. So, after taking a glass of soda-water and brandy at the bar, he



CONVIVIALITY AT BOB SAWYER'S

turned into the coffee-room, dispirited rather than elevated by the occurrences of the evening.

Sitting in the front of the fire, with his back towards him, was a tallish gentleman in a great-coat: the only other occupant of the room. It was rather a cool evening for the season of the year, and the gentleman drew his chair aside to afford the new comer a sight of the fire. What were Mr. Winkle's feelings when, in doing so, he disclosed to view the face and figure of the vindictive and sanguinary Dowler!

Mr. Winkle's first impulse was to give a violent pull at the nearest bell-handle, but that unfortunately happened to be immediately behind Mr. Dowler's head. He had made one step towards it, before he checked himself. As he did so, Mr. Dowler very hastily drew back.

"Mr. Winkle, sir. Be calm. Don't strike me. I won't bear it. A blow! Never!" said Mr. Dowler, looking meeker than Mr. Winkle had expected in a gentleman of his ferocity.

"A blow, sir?" stammered Mr. Winkle.

"A blow, sir," replied Dowler. "Compose your feelings. Sit down. Hear me."

"Sir," said Mr. Winkle, trembling from head to foot, "before I consent to sit down beside, or opposite you, without the presence of a waiter. I must be secured by some further understanding. You used a threat against me last night, sir, a dreadful threat, sir." Here Mr. Winkle turned very pale indeed, and stopped short.

"I did," said Dowler, with a countenance almost as white as Mr. Winkle's. "Circumstances were suspicious. They have been explained. I respect your bravery. Your feeling is upright. Conscious innocence. There's my hand. Grasp it."

"Really, sir," said Mr. Winkle, hesitating whether to give his hand or not, and almost fearing that it was demanded in order that he might be taken at an advantage, "really sir, I—"

"I know what you mean," interposed Dowler. "You feel aggrieved. Very natural. So should I. I was wrong. I beg your pardon. Be friendly. Forgive me." With this, Dowler fairly forced his hand upon Mr. Winkle, and shaking it with the utmost vehemence, declared he was a fellow of extreme spirit, and he had a higher opinion of him than ever.

"Now," said Dowler, "sit down. Relate it all. How did you find me? When did you follow? Be frank. Tell me."

"It's quite accidental," replied Mr. Winkle, greatly perplexed by the curious and unexpected nature of the interview, "Quite."

"Glad of it," said Dowler. "I woke this morning. I had forgotten my threat. I laughed at the accident. I felt friendly. I said so."

"To whom?" inquired Mr. Winkle.

"To Mrs. Dowler. 'You made a vow,' said she. 'I did,' said I. 'It was a rash one,' said she. 'It was,' said I. 'I'll apologise. Where is he?'"

"Who?" inquired Mr. Winkle.

"You," replied Dowler. "I went down stairs. You were not to be found. Pickwick looked gloomy. Shook his head. Hoped no violence would be committed. I saw it all. You felt yourself insulted. You had gone, for a friend perhaps. Possibly for pistols. 'High spirit,' said I. 'I admire him.'"

Mr. Winkle coughed, and beginning to see how the land lay, assumed a look of importance.

"I left a note for you," resumed Dowler. "I said I was sorry. So I was. Pressing business called me here. You were not satisfied. You followed. You required a verbal explanation. You were right. It's all over now. My business is finished. I go back to-morrow. Join me."

As Dowler progressed in his explanation, Mr. Winkle's countenance grew more and more dignified. The mysterious nature of the commencement of their conversation was explained; Mr. Dowler had as great an objection to duelling as himself; in short, this blustering and awful personage was one of the most egregious cowards in existence, and interpreting Mr. Winkle's absence through the medium of his own fears, had taken the same step as himself, and prudently retired until all excitement of feeling should have subsided.

As the real state of the case dawned upon Mr. Winkle's mind, he looked very terrible, and said he was perfectly satisfied; but at the same time, said so, with an air that left Mr. Dowler no alternative but to infer that if he had not been, something most horrible and destructive must inevitably have occurred. Mr. Dowler appeared to be impressed with a becoming sense of Mr. Winkle's magnanimity

and condescension ; and the two belligerents parted for the night, with many protestations of eternal friendship.

About half-past twelve o'clock, when Mr. Winkle had been revelling some twenty minutes in the full luxury of his first sleep, he was suddenly awakened by a loud knocking at his chamber-door, which, being repeated with increased vehemence, caused him to start up in bed, and inquire who was there, and what the matter was.

"Please, sir, here's a young man which says he must see you directly," responded the voice of the chambermaid.

"A young man!" exclaimed Mr. Winkle.

"No mistake about that 'ere sir," replied another voice through the keyhole ; "and if that wery same interestin' young creetur ain't let in vithout delay, it's wery possible as his legs vill enter afore his countenance." The young man gave a gentle kick at one of the lower panels of the door, after he had given utterance to this hint, as if to add force and point to the remark.

"Is that you, Sam?" inquired Mr. Winkle, springing out of bed.

"Quite impossible to identify any gen'l'm'n vith any degree o' mental satisfaction, vithout lookin' at him, sir," replied the voice, dogmatically.

Mr. Winkle, not much doubting who the young man was, unlocked the door ; which he had no sooner done, than Mr. Samuel Weller entered with great precipitation, and carefully re-locking it on the inside, deliberately put the key in his waistcoat pocket : and, after surveying Mr. Winkle from head to foot, said :

"You're a wery humorous young gen'l'm'n, you air, sir!"

"What do you mean by this conduct, Sam?" inquired Mr. Winkle, indignantly. "Get out, sir, this instant. What do you mean, sir?"

"What do *I* mean," retorted Sam ; "come, sir, this is rayther too rich, as the young lady said, wen she remonstrated vith the pastry-cook, arter he'd sold her a pork-pie as had got nothin' but fat inside. What do *I* mean ! Well, that ain't a bad 'un, that ain't."

"Unlock that door, and leave this room immediately, sir," said Mr. Winkle.

"I shall leave this here room, sir, just precisely at the wery same moment as you leaves it," responded Sam, speaking in a forcible manner, and seating himself with perfect

gravity. "If I find it necessary to carry you away, pick-a-back, o' course I shall leave it the least bit o' time possible afore you; but allow me to express a hope as you won't reduce me to ex-tremities: in saying wich, I merely quote wot the nobleman said to the fractious pennywinkle, ven he wouldn't come out of his shell by means of a pin, and he consequently began to be afeered that he should be obliged to crack him in the parlour-door." At the end of this address, which was unusually lengthy for him, Mr. Weller planted his hands on his knees, and looked full in Mr. Winkle's face, with an expression of countenance which showed that he had not the remotest intention of being trifled with.

"You're a amiably-disposed young man, sir, I don't think," resumed Mr. Weller, in a tone of moral reproof, "to go involving our precious governor in all sorts o' fan-teegs, wen he's made up his mind to go through every think for principle. You're far worse nor Dodson, sir; and as for Fogg, I consider him a born angel to you!" Mr. Weller having accompanied this last sentiment with an emphatic slap on each knee, folded his arms with a look of great disgust, and threw himself back in his chair, as if awaiting the criminal's defence.

"My good fellow," said Mr. Winkle, extending his hand; his teeth chattering all the time he spoke, for he had been standing, during the whole of Mr. Weller's lecture, in his night-gear; "My good fellow, I respect your attachment to my excellent friend, and I am very sorry indeed, to have added to his causes for disquiet. There, Sam, there!"

"Well," said Sam, rather sulkily, but giving the proffered hand a respectful shake at the same time: "Well, so you ought to be, and I am wery glad to find you air; for, if I can help it, I won't have him put upon by nobody, and that's all about it."

"Certainly not, Sam," said Mr. Winkle. "There! Now go to bed, Sam, and we'll talk further about this, in the morning."

"I'm wery sorry," said Sam, "but I can't go to bed."

"Not go to bed!" repeated Mr. Winkle.

"No," said Sam, shaking his head. "Can't be done."

"You don't mean to say you're going back to-night, Sam?" urged Mr. Winkle, greatly surprised.

"Not unless you particklerly wish it," replied Sam; "but

I musn't leave this here room. The governor's orders was peremptory."

"Nonsense, Sam," said Mr. Winkle, "I must stop here two or three days; and more than that, Sam, you must stop here too, to assist me in gaining an interview with a young lady—Miss Allen, Sam; you remember her—whom I must and will see before I leave Bristol."

But in reply to each of these positions, Sam shook his head with great firmness, and energetically replied, "It can't be done."

After a great deal of argument and representation on the part of Mr. Winkle, however, and a full disclosure of what had passed in the interview with Dowler, Sam began to waver; and at length a compromise was effected, of which the following were the main and principal conditions:

That Sam should retire, and leave Mr. Winkle in the undisturbed possession of his apartment, on the condition that he had permission to lock the door on the outside, and carry off the key; provided always, that in the event of an alarm of fire, or other dangerous contingency, the door should be instantly unlocked. That a letter should be written to Mr. Pickwick early next morning, and forwarded per Dowler, requesting his consent to Sam and Mr. Winkle's remaining at Bristol, for the purpose, and with the object, already assigned, and begging an answer by the next coach; if favourable, the aforesaid parties to remain accordingly, and if not, to return to Bath immediately on the receipt thereof. And, lastly, that Mr. Winkle should be understood as distinctly pledging himself not to resort to the window, fireplace, or other surreptitious mode of escape, in the meanwhile. These stipulations having been concluded, Sam locked the door and departed.

He had nearly got down stairs, when he stopped, and drew the key from his pocket.

"I quite forgot about the knockin' down," said Sam, half turning back. "The governor distinctly said it was to be done. Amazin' stupid o' me, that 'ere! Never mind," said Sam, brightening up, "it's easily done to-morrow, anyvays."

Apparently much consoled by this reflection, Mr. Weller once more deposited the key in his pocket, and descending the remainder of the stairs without any fresh visitations of conscience, was soon, in common with the other inmates of the house, buried in profound repose.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MR. SAMUEL WELLER, BEING ENTRUSTED WITH A MISSION
OF LOVE, PROCEEDS TO EXECUTE IT; WITH WHAT
SUCCESS WILL HEREINAFTER APPEAR

DURING the whole of next day, Sam kept Mr. Winkle steadily in sight, fully determined not to take his eye off him for one instant, until he should receive express instructions from the fountain-head. However disagreeable Sam's very close watch and great vigilance were to Mr. Winkle, he thought it better to bear with them, than, by any act of violent opposition, to hazard being carried away by force, which Mr. Weller more than once strongly hinted was the line of conduct that a strict sense of duty prompted him to pursue. There is little reason to doubt that Sam would very speedily have quieted his scruples, by bearing Mr. Winkle back to Bath, bound hand and foot, had not Mr. Pickwick's prompt attention to the note, which Dowler had undertaken to deliver, forestalled any such proceeding. In short, at eight o'clock in the evening, Mr. Pickwick himself walked into the coffee-room of the Bush tavern, and told Sam with a smile, to his very great relief, that he had done quite right, and it was unnecessary for him to mount guard any longer.

"I thought it better to come myself," said Mr. Pickwick, addressing Mr. Winkle, as Sam disencumbered him of his great-coat and travelling shawl, "to ascertain, before I gave my consent to Sam's employment in this matter, that you are quite in earnest and serious, with respect to this young lady."

"Serious, from my heart—from my soul!" returned Mr. Winkle, with great energy.

"Remember," said Mr. Pickwick, with beaming eyes. "we met her at our excellent and hospitable friend's, Winkle. It

would be an ill return to tamper lightly, and without due consideration with this young lady's affections. I'll not allow that, sir. I'll not allow it."

"I have no such intention, indeed," exclaimed Mr. Winkle, warmly. "I have considered the matter well, for a long time, and I feel that my happiness is bound up in her."

"That's wot we call tying it up in a small parcel, sir," interposed Mr. Weller, with an agreeable smile.

Mr. Winkle looked somewhat stern at this interruption and Mr. Pickwick angrily requested his attendant not to jest with one of the best feelings of our nature; to which Sam replied, "That he wouldn't, if he was aware on it; but there were so many on 'em, that he hardly know'd which was the best ones wen he heard 'em mentioned."

Mr. Winkle then recounted what had passed between himself and Mr. Ben Allen, relative to Arabella; stated that his object was to gain an interview with the young lady, and make a formal disclosure of his passion; and declared his conviction, founded on certain dark hints and mutterings of the aforesaid Ben, that, wherever she was at present immured, it was somewhere near the Downs. And this was his whole stock of knowledge or suspicion on the subject.

With this very slight clue to guide him, it was determined that Mr. Weller should start next morning on an expedition of discovery; it was also arranged that Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle, who were less confident of their powers, should parade the town meanwhile, and accidentally drop in upon Mr. Bob Sawyer in the course of the day, in the hope of seeing or hearing something of the young lady's whereabouts.

Accordingly, next morning, Sam Weller issued forth upon his quest, in no way daunted by the very discouraging prospect before him; and away he walked, up one street and down another—we were going to say, up one hill and down another, only it's all uphill at Clifton—without meeting with anything or anybody that tended to throw the faintest light on the matter in hand. Many were the colloquies into which Sam entered with grooms who were airing horses on roads, and nursemaids who were airing children in lanes; but nothing could Sam elicit from either the first-mentioned or the last, which bore the slightest reference to the object of his artfully-prosecuted inquiries. There were a great many young ladies in a great many houses, the greater part whereof were shrewdly suspected by the male and female domestics

to be deeply attached to somebody, or perfectly ready to become so, if opportunity offered. But as none among these young ladies was Miss Arabella Allen, the information left Sam at exactly the old point of wisdom at which he had stood before.

Sam struggled across the Downs against a good high wind, wondering whether it was always necessary to hold your hat on with both hands in that part of the country, and came to a shady by-place about which were sprinkled several little villas of quiet and secluded appearance. Outside a stable-door at the bottom of a long back lane without a thoroughfare, a groom in undress was idling about, apparently persuading himself that he was doing something with a spade and a wheelbarrow. We may remark, in this place, that we have scarcely ever seen a groom near a stable, in his lazy moments, who has not been, to a greater or less extent, the victim of this singular delusion.

Sam thought he might as well talk to this groom as to any one else, especially as he was very tired with walking, and there was a good large stone just opposite the wheelbarrow; so he strolled down the lane, and, seating himself on the stone, opened a conversation with the ease and freedom for which he was remarkable.

"Mornin', old friend," said Sam.

"Arternoon, you mean," replied the groom, casting a surly look at Sam.

"You're wery right, old friend," said Sam; "I *do* mean arternoon. How are you?"

"Why, I don't find myself much the better for seeing of you," replied the ill-tempered groom.

"That's wery odd—that is," said Sam, "for you look so uncommon cheerful, and seem altogether so lively, that it does vun's heart good to see you."

The surly groom looked surlier still at this, but not sufficiently so to produce any effect upon Sam, who immediately inquired, with a countenance of great anxiety, whether his master's name was not Walker.

"No, it ain't," said the groom.

"Nor Brown, I s'pose?" said Sam.

"No, it ain't."

"Nor Vilson?"

"No; nor that neither," said the groom.

"Vell," replied Sam, "then I'm mistaken, and he hasn't

got the honor o' my acquaintance, which I thought he had. Don't wait here out o' compliment to me," said Sam, as the groom wheeled in the barrow, and prepared to shut the gate "Ease afore ceremony, old boy; I'll excuse you."

"I'd knock your head off for half-a-crown," said the surly groom, bolting one half of the gate.

"Couldn't afford to have it cone on those terms," rejoined Sam. "It 'ud be worth a life's board wages at least, to you, and 'ud be cheap at that. Make my compliments in doors. Tell 'em not to wait dinner for me, and say they needn't mind puttin' any by, for it'll be cold afore I come in."

In reply to this, the groom waxing very wroth, muttered a desire to damage somebody's person; but disappeared without carrying it into execution, slamming the door angrily after him, and wholly unheeding Sam's affectionate request, that he would leave him a lock of his hair before he went.

Sam continued to sit on the large stone, meditating upon what was best to be done, and revolving in his mind a plan for knocking at all the doors within five miles of Bristol, taking them at a hundred and fifty or two hundred a day, and endeavouring to find Miss Arabella by that expedient, when accident all of a sudden threw in his way what he might have sat there for a twelvemonth and yet not found without it.

Into the lane where he sat, there opened three or four garden-gates, belonging to as many houses, which though detached from each other, were only separated by their gardens. As these were large and long, and well planted with trees, the houses were not only at some distance off, but the greater part of them were nearly concealed from view. Sam was sitting with his eyes fixed upon the dust-heap outside the next gate to that by which the groom had disappeared, profoundly turning over in his mind the difficulties of his present undertaking, when the gate opened, and a female servant came out into the lane to shake some bed-side carpets.

Sam was so very busy with his own thoughts, that it is probable he would have taken no more notice of the young woman than just raising his head and remarking that she had a very neat and pretty figure, if his feelings of gallantry had not been most strongly roused by observing that she had no one to help her, and that the carpets seemed too

heavy for her single strength. Mr. Weller was a gentleman of great gallantry in his own way, and he no sooner remarked this circumstance than he hastily rose from the large stone, and advanced towards her.

"My dear," said Sam, sliding up with an air of great respect, "You'll spile that verry pretty figure out o' all perportion if you shake them carpets by yourself. Let me help you."

The young lady, who had been coyly affecting not to know that a gentleman was so near, turned round as Sam spoke—no doubt (indeed she said so, afterwards) to decline this offer from a perfect stranger—when instead of speaking, she started back, and uttered a half-suppressed scream. Sam was scarcely less stupefied, for in the countenance of the well-shaped female servant, he beheld the very eyes of his Valentine, the pretty housemaid from Mr. Nupkins's.

"Wy, Mary my dear!" said Sam.

"Lauk, Mr. Weller," said Mary, "how you do frighten one!"

Sam made no verbal answer to this complaint, nor can we precisely say what reply he *did* make. We merely know that after a short pause Mary said, "Lor, do adun, Mr. Weller!" and that his hat had fallen off a few moments before—from both of which tokens we should be disposed to infer that one kiss or more, had passed between the parties.

"Why, how did you come here?" said Mary, when the conversation to which this interruption had been offered, was resumed.

"O' course I came to look arter you, my darlin'," replied Mr. Weller; for once permitting his passion to get the better of his veracity.

"And how did you know I was here?" inquired Mary. "Who could have told you that I took another service at Ipswich, and that they afterwards moved all the way here? Who *could* have told you that, Mr. Weller?"

"Ah to be sure," said Sam with a cunning look, "that's the pint. Who could ha' told me?"

"It wasn't Mr. Muzzle, was it?" inquired Mary.

"Oh, no," replied Sam, with a solemn shake of the head, "it warn't him."

"It must have been the cook," said Mary.

"O' course it must," said Sam.

"Well, I never heard the like of that!" exclaimed Mary.

"No more did I," said Sam. "But Mary, my dear:" here Sam's manner grew extremely affectionate: "Mary, my dear," I've got another affair in hand as is wery pressin'. There's one o' my governor's friends—Mr. Winkle, you remember him."

"Him in the green coat?" said Mary. "Oh, yes, I remember him."

"Well," said Sam, "he's in a horrid state o' love; reg'larly comfoozled, and done over with it."

"Lor!" interposed Mary.

"Yes," said Sam: "but that s nothin' if we could find out the young 'ooman;" and here Sam, with many digressions upon the personal beauty of Mary, and the unspeakable tortures he had experienced since he last saw her, gave a faithful account of Mr. Winkle's present predicament.

"Well," said Mary, "I never did!"

"O' course not," said Sam, "and nobody never did, nor never vill neither; and here am I a walkin' about like the wandering Jew—a sportin' character you have perhaps heerd on, Mary, my dear, as wos always doin' a match agin' time, and never vent to sleep—looking arter this here Miss Arabella Allen."

"Miss who?" said Mary, in great astonishment.

"Miss Arabella Allen," said Sam.

"Goodness gracious!" said Mary, pointing to the garden door which the sulky groom had locked after him. "Why, it's that very house; she's been living there these six weeks. Their upper housemaid, which is lady's maid too, told me all about it over the wash-house palin's before the family was out of bed, one mornin'."

"Wot, the wery next door to you?" said Sam.

"The very next," replied Mary.

Mr. Weller was so deeply overcome on receiving this intelligence that he found it absolutely necessary to cling to his fair informant for support; and divers little love passages had passed between them, before he was sufficiently collected to return to the subject.

"Vell," said Sam at length, "if this don't beat cock-fightin', nothin' never vill, as the Lord Mayor said, ven the chief secretary o' state proposed his missis's health arter dinner. That wery next house! Wy, I've got a message to her as I've been a tryin' all day to deliver."

"Ah," said Mary, "but you can't deliver it now, because she only walks in the garden in the evening, and then only for a very little time; she never goes out, without the old lady."

Sam ruminated for a few moments, and finally hit upon the following plan of operations; that he should return just at dusk—the time at which Arabella invariably took her walk—and, being admitted by Mary into the garden of the house to which she belonged, would contrive to scramble up the wall, beneath the overhanging boughs of a large pear-tree, which would effectually screen him from observation; would there deliver his message, and arrange, if possible, an interview on behalf of Mr. Winkle for the ensuing evening at the same hour. Having made this arrangement with great dispatch, he assisted Mary in the long-deferred occupation of shaking the carpets.

It is not half as innocent a thing as it looks, that shaking little pieces of carpet—at least, there may be no great harm in the shaking, but the folding is a very insidious process. So long as the shaking lasts, and the two parties are kept the carpet's length apart, it is as innocent an amusement as can well be devised; but when the folding begins, and the distance between them gets gradually lessened from one half its former length to a quarter, and then to an eighth, and then to a sixteenth, and then to a thirty-second, if the carpet be long enough: it becomes dangerous. We do not know, to a nicety, how many pieces of carpet were folded in this instance, but we can venture to state that as many pieces as there were, so many times did Sam kiss the pretty housemaid.

Mr. Weller regaled himself with moderation at the nearest tavern until it was nearly dusk, and then returned to the lane without the thoroughfare. Having been admitted into the garden by Mary, and having received from that lady sundry admonitions concerning the safety of his limbs and neck, Sam mounted into the pear-tree, to wait until Arabella should come in sight.

He waited so long without this anxiously expected event occurring, that he began to think it was not going to take place at all, when he heard light footsteps upon the gravel, and immediately afterwards beheld Arabella walking pensively down the garden. As soon as she came nearly below the tree, Sam began, by way of gently indicating

his presence, to make sundry diabolical noises similar to those which would probably be natural to a person of middle age who had been afflicted with a combination of inflammatory sore throat, croup, and whooping-cough, from his earliest infancy.

Upon this, the young lady cast a hurried glance towards the spot from whence the dreadful sounds proceeded; and her previous alarm being now at all diminished when she saw a man among the branches, she would most certainly have decamped, and alarmed the house, had not fear fortunately deprived her of the power of moving, and caused her to sink down on a garden seat; which happened by good luck to be near at hand.

"She's a goin' off," soliloquised Sam in great perplexity. "Wot a thing it is, as these here young creeturs *will* go a faintin' away just wen they oughtn't to. Here, young 'ooman, Miss Sawbones, Mrs. Vinkle, don't!"

Whether it was the magic of Mr. Vinkle's name, or the coolness of the open air, or some recollection of Mr. Weller's voice, that revived Arabella, matters not. She raised her head and languidly inquired, "Who's that, and what do you want?"

"Hush," said Sam, swinging himself on to the wall, and crouching there in as small a compass as he could reduce himself to, "only me, miss, only me."

"Mr. Pickwick's servant;" said Arabella, earnestly.

"The very same, miss," replied Sam. "Here's Mr. Vinkle reg'larly sewed up vith desperation, miss."

"Ah!" said Arabella, drawing nearer the wall.

"Ah indeed," said Sam. "Ve thought ve should ha' been obliged to straightveskit him last night; he's been a ravin' all day; and he says if he can't see you afore to-morrow night's over, he vishes he may be somethin'-unpleasant if he don't drownd hisself."

"Oh no, no, Mr. Weller!" said Arabella, clasping her hands.

"That's wot he says, miss," replied Sam. "He's a man of his word, and it's my opinion he'll do it, miss. He's heerd all about you from the Sawbones in barnacles."

"From my brother!" said Arabella, having some faint recognition of Sam's description.

"I don't rightly know which is your brother, miss," replied Sam. "Is it the dirtiest vun o' the two?"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Weller," returned Arabella, "go on. Make haste, pray."

"Well, miss," said Sam, "he's heerd all about it from him; and it's the gov'nor's opinion that if you don't see him wery quick, the Sawbones as we've been a speaking on, 'ull get as much extra lead in his head as'll damage the dewelopment o' the orgins if they ever put it in spirits arterwards."

"Oh, what can I do to prevent these dreadful quarrels!" exclaimed Arabella.

"It's the suspicion of a priory 'tachment as is the cause of it all," replied Sam. "You'd better see him, miss."

"But how?—where?" cried Arabella. "I dare not leave the house alone. My brother is so unkind, so unreasonable! I know how strange my talking thus to you must appear, Mr. Weller, but I am very, very unhappy—" and here poor Arabella wept so bitterly, that Sam grew chivalrous.

"It may seem very strange talkin' to me about these here affairs, miss," said Sam with great vehemence: "but all I can say is, that I'm not only ready but villin' to do anythin' as'll make matters agreeable; and if chuckin' either o' them Sawboneses out o' winder 'ull do it, I'm the man." As Sam Weller said this, he tucked up his wristbands, at the imminent hazard of falling off the wall in so doing, to intimate his readiness to set to work immediately.

Flattering as these professions of good feeling were, Arabella resolutely declined (most unaccountably as Sam thought), to avail herself of them. For some time she strenuously refused to grant Mr. Winkle the interview Sam had so pathetically requested; but at length, when the conversation threatened to be interrupted by the unwelcome arrival of a third party, she hurriedly gave him to understand, with many professions of gratitude, that it was barely possible she might be in the garden an hour later, next evening. Sam understood this perfectly well; and Arabella bestowing upon him one of her sweetest smiles, tripped gracefully away, leaving Mr. Weller in a state of very great admiration of her charms, both personal and mental.

Having descended in safety from the wall, and not forgotten to devote a few moments to his own particular business in the same department, Mr. Weller then made the best of his way back to the Bush, where his prolonged absence had occasioned much speculation and some alarm.

"We must be careful," said Mr. Pickwick, after listening attentively to Sam's tale, "not for our own sakes, but for that of the young lady. We must be very cautious."

"We!" said Mr. Winkle, with marked emphasis.

Mr. Pickwick's momentary look of indignation at the tone of this remark, subsided into his characteristic expression of benevolence, as he replied:

"We, sir! I shall accompany you."

"You!" said Mr. Winkle.

"I," replied Mr. Pickwick mildly. "In affording you this interview, the young lady has taken a natural, perhaps, but still a very imprudent step. If I am present at the meeting, a mutual friend, who is old enough to be the father of both parties, the voice of calumny can never be raised against her hereafter."

Mr. Pickwick's eyes lightened with honest exultation at his own foresight, as he spoke thus. Mr. Winkle was touched by this little trait of his delicate respect for the young *protégée* of his friend, and took his hand with a feeling of regard, akin to veneration.

"You *shall* go," said Mr. Winkle.

"I will," said Mr. Pickwick. "Sam, have my great-coat and shawl ready, and order a conveyance to be at the door to-morrow evening, rather earlier than is absolutely necessary, in order that we may be in good time."

Mr. Weller touched his hat, as an earnest of his obedience, and withdrew to make all needful preparations for the expedition.

The coach was punctual to the time appointed; and Mr. Weller, after duly installing Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle inside, took his seat on the box by the driver. They alighted, as had been agreed on, about a quarter of a mile from the place of rendezvous, and desiring the coachman to await their return, proceeded the remaining distance on foot.

It was at this stage of the undertaking that Mr. Pickwick, with many smiles and various other indications of great self-satisfaction, produced from one of his coat pockets a dark lantern, with which he had specially provided himself for the occasion, and the great mechanical beauty of which, he proceeded to explain to Mr. Winkle as they walked along, to the no small surprise of the few stragglers they met.

"I should have been the better for something of this kind, in my last garden expedition at night; eh, Sam?"

said Mr. Pickwick, looking good-humouredly round at his follower, who was trudging behind.

"Wery nice things, if they're managed properly, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "but when you don't want to be seen, I think they're more useful arter the candle's gone out, than wen it's alight."

Mr. Pickwick appeared struck by Sam's remarks, for he put the lantern into his pocket again, and they walked on in silence.

"Down here, sir," said Sam. "Let me lead the way. This is the lane, sir."

Down the lane they went, and dark enough it was. Mr. Pickwick brought out the lantern, once or twice, as they groped their way along, and threw a very brilliant little tunnel of light before them, about a foot in diameter. It was very pretty to look at, but seemed to have the effect of rendering surrounding objects rather darker than before.

At length they arrived at the large stone. Here Sam recommended his master and Mr. Winkle to seat themselves, while he reconnoitred, and ascertained whether Mary was yet in waiting.

After an absence of five or ten minutes, Sam returned, to say that the gate was opened, and all quiet. Following him with stealthy tread, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle soon found themselves in the garden. Here everybody said "Hush!" a good many times; and that being done, no one seemed to have any very distinct apprehension of what was to be done next.

"Is Miss Allen in the garden yet, Mary?" inquired Mr. Winkle, much agitated.

"I don't know, sir," replied the pretty housemaid. "The best thing to be done, sir, will be for Mr. Weller to give you a hoist up into the tree, and perhaps Mr. Pickwick will have the goodness to see that nobody comes up the lane, while I watch at the other end of the garden. Goodness gracious, what's that!"

"That 'ere blessed lantern 'ull be the death on us all," exclaimed Sam, peevishly. "Take care wot you're a doin' on, sir; you're a sendin' a blaze o' light, right into the back parlor winder."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pickwick, turning hastily aside, "I didn't mean to do that."

'Now, it's in the next house, sir,' remonstrated Sam.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, turning round again.

"Now, it's in the stable, and they'll think the place is a' fire," said Sam. "Shut it up, sir, can't you?"

"It's the most extraordinary lantern I ever met with, in all my life!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, greatly bewildered by the effects he had so unintentionally produced. "I never saw such a powerful reflector."

"It'll be vun too powerful for us, if you keep blazin' away in that manner, sir," replied Sam, as Mr. Pickwick, after various unsuccessful efforts, managed to close the slide. "There's the young lady's footsteps. Now, Mr. Vinkle, sir, up vith you."

"Stop, stop!" said Mr. Pickwick, "I must speak to her first. Help me up, Sam."

"Gently, sir," said Sam, planting his head against the wall, and making a platform of his back. "Step a top o' that 'ere flower-pot, sir. Now then, up vith you."

"I'm afraid I shall hurt you, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Never mind me, sir," replied Sam. "Lend him a hand, Mr. Vinkle, sir. Steady, sir, steady! That's the time o' day!"

As Sam spoke, Mr. Pickwick, by exertions almost supernatural in a gentleman of his years and weight, contrived to get upon Sam's back; and Sam gently raising himself up, and Mr. Pickwick holding on fast by the top of the wall, while Mr. Winkle clasped him tight by the legs, they contrived by these means to bring his spectacles just above the level of the coping.

"My dear," said Mr. Pickwick, looking over the wall, and catching sight of Arabella, on the other side, "Don't be frightened, my dear, it's only me."

"Oh pray go away, Mr. Pickwick," said Arabella. "Tell them all to go away. I am so dreadfully frightened. Dear, dear Mr. Pickwick, don't stop there. You'll fall down and kill yourself, I know you will."

"Now, pray don't alarm yourself, my dear," said Mr. Pickwick, soothingly. "There is not the least cause for fear, I assure you. Stand firm, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, looking down.

"All right, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "Don't be longer than you can conveniently help, sir. You're rayther heavy."

"Only another moment, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick. "I merely wished you to know, my dear, that I should not have

allowed my young friend to see you in this clandestine way, if the situation in which you are placed, had left him any alternative; and lest the impropriety of this step should cause you any uneasiness, my love, it may be a satisfaction to you, to know that I am present. That's all, my dear."

"Indeed, Mr. Pickwick, I am very much obliged to you for your kindness and consideration," replied Arabella, drying her tears with her handkerchief. She would probably have said much more, had not Mr. Pickwick's head disappeared with great swiftness, in consequence of a false step on Sam's shoulder, which brought him suddenly to the ground. He was up again in an instant, however, and bidding Mr. Winkle make haste and get the interview over, ran out into the lane to keep watch, with all the courage and ardour of youth. Mr. Winkle himself, inspired by the occasion, was on the wall in a moment, merely pausing to request Sam to be careful of his master.

"I'll take care on him, sir," replied Sam. "Leave him to me."

"Where is he? What's he doing, Sam?" inquired Mr. Winkle.

"Bless his old gaiters," rejoined Sam, looking out at the garden-door. "He's a keepin' guard in the lane vith that 'ere dark lantern, like a amiable Guy Fawkes! I never see such a fine creetur in my days. Blessed if I don't think his heart must ha' been born five-and-twenty year arter his body, at least!"

Mr. Winkle stayed not to hear the encomium upon his friend. He had dropped from the wall; thrown himself at Arabella's feet; and by this time was pleading the sincerity of his passion with an eloquence worthy even of Mr. Pickwick himself.

While these things were going on in the open air, an elderly gentleman of scientific attainments was seated in his library, two or three houses off, writing a philosophical treatise, and ever and anon moistening his clay and his labours with a glass of claret from a venerable-looking bottle which stood by his side. In the agonies of composition, the elderly gentleman looked sometimes at the carpet, sometimes at the ceiling, and sometimes at the wall; and when neither carpet, ceiling, nor wall, afforded the requisite degree of inspiration, he looked out of the window.

In one of these pauses of invention, the scientific gentleman

was gazing abstractedly on the thick darkness outside, when he was very much surprised by observing a most brilliant light glide through the air, at a short distance above the ground, and almost instantaneously vanish. After a short time the phenomenon was repeated, not once or twice, but several times: at last the scientific gentleman, laying down his pen, began to consider to what natural causes these appearances were to be assigned.

They were not meteors; they were too low. They were not glow-worms; they were too high. They were not will-o'-the-wisps; they were not fire-flies; they were not fire-works. What could they be? Some extraordinary and wonderful phenomenon of nature, which no philosopher had ever seen before; something which it had been reserved for him alone to discover, and which he should immortalize his name by chronicling for the benefit of posterity. Full of this idea, the scientific gentleman seized his pen again, and committed to paper sundry notes of these unparalleled appearances, with the date, day, hour, minute, and precise second at which they were visible: all of which were to form the data of a voluminous treatise of great research and deep learning, which should astonish all the atmospherical sages that ever drew breath in any part of the civilised globe.

He threw himself back in his easy chair, wrapped in contemplations of his future greatness. The mysterious light appeared more brilliantly than before: dancing, to all appearance, up and down the lane, crossing from side to side, and moving in an orbit as eccentric as comets themselves.

The scientific gentleman was a bachelor. He had no wife to call in and astonish, so he rang the bell for his servant.

"Pruffle," said the scientific gentleman, "there is something very extraordinary in the air to-night. Did you see that?" said the scientific gentleman, pointing out of the window, as the light again became visible.

"Yes, I did, sir."

"What do you think of it, Pruffle?"

"Think of it, sir?"

"Yes. You have been bred up in this country. What should you say was the cause of those lights, now?"

The scientific gentleman smilingly anticipated Pruffle's reply that he could assign no cause for them at all. Pruffle meditated.

"I should say it was thieves, sir," said Pruffle at length.

"You're a fool, and may go down-stairs," said the scientific gentleman.

"Thank you, sir," said Pruffle. And down he went.

But the scientific gentleman could not rest under the idea of the ingenious treatise he had projected being lost to the world, which must inevitably be the case if the speculation of the ingenious Mr. Pruffle were not stifled in its birth. He put on his hat and walked quickly down the garden, determined to investigate the matter to the very bottom.

Now, shortly before the scientific gentleman walked out into the garden, Mr. Pickwick had run down the lane as fast as he could, to convey a false alarm that somebody was coming that way; occasionally drawing back the slide of the dark lantern to keep himself from the ditch. The alarm was no sooner given, than Mr. Winkle scrambled back over the wall, and Arabella ran into the house; the garden-gate was shut, and the three adventurers were making the best of their way down the lane, when they were startled by the scientific gentleman unlocking his garden-gate.

"Hold hard," whispered Sam, who was, of course, the first of the party. "Show a light for just yun second, sir."

Mr. Pickwick did as he was desired, and Sam, seeing a man's head peeping out very cautiously within half-a-yard of his own, gave it a gentle tap with his clenched fist, which knocked it, with a hollow sound, against the gate. Having performed this feat with great suddenness and dexterity, Mr. Weller caught Mr. Pickwick up on his back, and followed Mr. Winkle down the lane at a pace which, considering the burden he carried, was perfectly astonishing.

"Have you got your vind back agin, sir," inquired Sam, when they had reached the end.

"Quite. Quite, now," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Then come along, sir," said Sam, setting his master on his feet again. "Come between us, sir. Not half a mile to run. Think you're vinnin a cup, sir. Now for it."

Thus encouraged, Mr. Pickwick made the very best use of his legs. It may be confidently stated that a pair of black gaiters never got over the ground in better style than did those of Mr. Pickwick on this memorable occasion.

The coach was waiting, the horses were fresh, the roads were good, and the driver was willing. The whole party

arrived in safety at the Bush before Mr. Pickwick recovered his breath.

"In with you at once, sir," said Sam, as he helped his master out. "Don't stop a second in the street, arter that 'ere exercise. Beg your pardon, sir," continued Sam, touching his hat as Mr. Winkle descended. "Hope there warn't a priory 'tachment, sir?"

Mr. Winkle grasped his humble friend by the hand, and whispered in his ear, "It's all right, Sam; quite right." Upon which Mr. Weller struck three distinct blows upon his nose in token of intelligence, smiled, winked, and proceeded to put the steps up, with a countenance expressive of lively satisfaction.

As to the scientific gentleman, he demonstrated, in a masterly treatise, that these wonderful lights were the effect of electricity; and clearly proved the same by detailing how a flash of fire danced before his eyes when he put his head out of the gate, and how he received a shock which stunned him for a quarter of an hour afterwards; which demonstration delighted all the Scientific Associations beyond measure, and caused him to be considered a light of science ever afterwards.

CHAPTER XL

INTRODUCES MR. PICKWICK TO A NEW AND NOT UNINTERESTING SCENE IN THE GREAT DRAMA OF LIFE

THE remainder of the period which Mr. Pickwick had assigned as the duration of the stay at Bath, passed over without the occurrence of anything material. Trinity Term commenced. On the expiration of its first week, Mr. Pickwick and his friends returned to London ; and the former gentleman, attended of course by Sam, straightway repaired to his old quarters at the George and Vulture.

On the third morning after their arrival, just as all the clocks in the city were striking nine individually, and somewhere about nine hundred and ninety-nine collectively, Sam was taking the air in George Yard, when a queer sort of fresh painted vehicle drove up, out of which there jumped with great agility, throwing the reins to a stout man who sat beside him, a queer sort of gentleman, who seemed made for the vehicle, and the vehicle for him.

The vehicle was not exactly a gig, neither was it a stanhope. It was not what is currently denominated a dog-cart, neither was it a taxed-cart, nor a chaise-cart, nor a guillotined cabriolet ; and yet it had something of the character of each and every of these machines. It was painted a bright yellow, with the shafts and wheels picked out in black ; and the driver sat, in the orthodox sporting style, on cushions piled about two feet above the rail. The horse was a bay, a well-looking animal enough ; but with something of a flash and dog-fighting air about him, nevertheless, which accorded both with the vehicle and his master.

The master himself was a man of about forty, with black hair, and carefully combed whiskers. He was dressed in a particularly gorgeous manner, with plenty of articles of jewellery about him—all about three sizes larger than those

which are usually worn by gentlemen—and a rough great-coat to crown the whole. Into one pocket of this great-coat, he thrust his left hand the moment he dismounted, while from the other he drew forth, with his right, a very bright and glaring silk handkerchief, with which he whisked a speck or two of dust from his boots, and then, crumbling it in his hand, swaggered up the court.

It had not escaped Sam's attention that, when this person dismounted, a shabby-looking man in a brown great-coat shorn of divers buttons, who had been previously slinking about, on the opposite side of the way, crossed over, and remained stationary close by. Having something more than a suspicion of the object of the gentleman's visit, Sam proceeded him to the George and Vulture, and, turning sharp round, planted himself in the centre of the doorway.

"Now, my fine fellow!" said the man in the rough coat, in an imperious tone, attempting at the same time to push his way past.

"Now, sir, wot's the matter!" replied Sam, returning the push with compound interest.

"Come, none of this, my man; this won't do with me." said the owner of the rough coat, raising his voice, and turning white. "Here, Smouch!"

"Well, wot's amiss here?" growled the man in the brown coat, who had been gradually sneaking up the court during this short dialogue.

"Only some insolence of this young man's," said the principal, giving Sam another push.

"Come, none o' this gammon," growled Smouch, giving him another, and a harder one.

This last push had the effect which it was intended by the experienced Mr. Smouch to produce; for while Sam, anxious to return the compliment, was grinding that gentleman's body against the doorpost, the principal crept past, and made his way to the bar: whither Sam, after bandying a few epithetical remarks with Mr. Smouch, followed at once.

"Good-morning, my dear," said the principal, addressing the young lady at the bar, with Botany Bay ease, and New South Wales gentility; "which is Mr. Pickwick's room, my dear?"

"Show him up," said the bar-maid to a waiter, without deigning another look at the exquisite, in reply to his inquiry.

The waiter led the way up stairs as he was desired, and the man in the rough coat followed, with Sam behind him: who, in his progress up the staircase, indulged in sundry gestures indicative of supreme contempt and defiance: to the unspeakable gratification of the servants and other lookers-on. Mr. Smouch, who was troubled with a hoarse cough, remained below, and expectorated in the passage.

Mr. Pickwick was fast asleep in bed, when his early visitor, followed by Sam, entered the room. The noise they made in so doing, awoke him.

"Shaving water, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, from within the curtains.

"Shave you directly, Mr. Pickwick," said the visitor, drawing one of them back from the bed's head. "I've got an execution against you, at the suit of Bardell.—Here's the warrant.—Common Pleas.—Here's my card. I suppose you'll come over to my house." Giving Mr. Pickwick a friendly tap on the shoulder, the sheriff's officer (for such he was) threw his card on the counterpane, and pulled a gold toothpick from his waistcoat pocket.

"Namby's the name," said the sheriff's deputy, as Mr. Pickwick took his spectacles from under the pillow, and put them on, to read the card. "Namby, Bell Alley, Coleman Street."

At this point, Sam Weller, who had had his eyes fixed hitherto on Mr. Namby's shining beaver, interfered:

"Are you a Quaker?" said Sam.

"I'll let you know who I am, before I've done with you," replied the indignant officer. "I'll teach you manners, my fine fellow, one of these fine mornings."

"Thankee," said Sam. "I'll do the same to you. Take your hat off." With this, Mr. Weller, in the most dexterous manner, knocked Mr. Namby's hat to the other side of the room with such violence, that he had very nearly caused him to swallow the gold tooth-pick into the bargain.

"Observe this, Mr. Pickwick," said the disconcerted officer, gasping for breath. "I've been assaulted in the execution of my dooty by your servant in your chamber. I'm in bodily fear. I call you to witness this."

"Don't witness nothin', sir," interposed Sam. "Shut your eyes up tight, sir. I'd pitch him out o' winder, only he couldn't fall far enough, 'cause o' the leads outside."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick in an angry voice, as his atten-

dant made various demonstrations of hostilities, "if you say another word, or offer the slightest interference with this person, I discharge you that instant."

"But, sir!" said Sam.

"Hold your tongue," interposed Mr. Pickwick. "Take that hat up again."

But this Sam flatly and positively refused to do; and, after he had been severely reprimanded by his master, the officer, being in a hurry, condescended to pick it up himself: venting a great variety of threats against Sam meanwhile, which that gentleman received with perfect composure: merely observing that if Mr. Namby would have the goodness to put his hat on again, he would knock it into the latter end of next week. Mr. Namby, perhaps thinking that such a process might be productive of inconvenience to himself, declined to offer the temptation, and, soon after, called up Smouch. Having informed him that the capture was made, and that he was to wait for the prisoner until he should have finished dressing, Namby then swaggered out, and drove away. Smouch, requesting Mr. Pickwick in a surly manner "to be as alive as he could, for it was a busy time," drew up a chair by the door, and sat there, until he had finished dressing. Sam was then dispatched for a hackney coach, and in it the triumvirate proceeded to Coleman Street. It was fortunate the distance was short, for Mr. Smouch, besides possessing no very enchanting conversational powers, was rendered a decidedly unpleasant companion in a limited space, by the physical weakness to which we have elsewhere adverted.

The coach having turned into a very narrow and dark street, stopped before a house with iron bars to all the windows; the door-posts of which were graced by the name and title of "Namby, Officer to the Sheriffs of London:" the inner gate having been opened by a gentleman who might have passed for a neglected twin brother of Mr. Smouch, and who was endowed with a large key for the purpose, Mr. Pickwick was shown into the "coffee-room."

This coffee-room was a front parlour: the principal features of which were fresh sand and stale tobacco smoke. Mr. Pickwick bowed to the three persons who were seated in it when he entered; and having dispatched Sam for Perker, withdrew into an obscure corner, and from thence looked with some curiosity upon his new companions.

One of these was a mere boy of nineteen or twenty, who, though it was yet barely ten o'clock, was drinking gin and water, and smoking a cigar: amusements to which, judging from his inflamed countenance, he had devoted himself pretty constantly for the last year or two of his life. Opposite him, engaged in stirring the fire with the toe of his right boot, was a coarse vulgar young man of about thirty, with a sallow face and harsh voice: evidently possessed of that knowledge of the world, and captivating freedom of manner, which is to be acquired in public-house parlours, and at low billiard-tables. The third tenant of the apartment was a middle-aged man in a very old suit of black, who looked pale and haggard, and paced up and down the room incessantly; stopping, now and then, to look with great anxiety out of the window as if he expected somebody, and then resuming his walk.

"You'd better have the loan of my razor this morning, Mr. Ayresleigh," said the man who was stirring the fire, tipping the wink to his friend the boy.

"Thank you, no, I shan't want it; I expect I shall be out, in the course of an hour or so," replied the other in a hurried manner. Then, walking again up to the window, and once more returning disappointed, he sighed deeply, and left the room; upon which the other two burst into a loud laugh.

"Well, I never saw such a game as that," said the gentleman who had offered the razor, whose name appeared to be Price. "Never!" Mr. Price confirmed the assertion with an oath, and then laughed again, when of course the boy (who thought his companion one of the most dashing fellows alive) laughed also.

"You'd hardly think, would you now," said Price, turning towards Mr. Pickwick, "that that chap's been here a week yesterday, and never once shaved himself yet, because he feels so certain he's going out in half an hour's time, that he thinks he may as well put it off till he gets home?"

"Poor man!" said Mr. Pickwick. "Are his chances of getting out of his difficulties really so great?"

"Chances be d—d," replied Price; "he hasn't half the ghost of one. I wouldn't give *that* for his chance of walking about the streets this time ten years." With this Mr. Price snapped his fingers contemptuously, and rang the bell.

"Give me a sheet of paper, Crookey," said Mr. Price to

the attendant, who in dress and general appearance looked something between a bankrupt grazier, and a drover in a state of insolvency; "and a glass of brandy and water, Crookey, dye hear? I'm going to write to my father, and I must have a stimulant, or I shan't be able to pitch it strong enough into the old boy." At this facetious speech, the young boy, it is almost needless to say, was fairly convulsed.

"That's right," said Mr. Price. "Never say die. All fun, ain't it?"

"Prime!" said the young gentleman.

"You've some spirit about you, you have," said Price. "You've seen something of life."

"I rather think I have," replied the boy. He had looked at it through the dirty panes of glass in a bar door.

Mr. Pickwick feeling not a little disgusted with this dialogue, as well as with the air and manner of the two beings by whom it had been carried on, was about to inquire whether he could not be accommodated with a private sitting-room, when two or three strangers of genteel appearance entered, at sight of whom the boy threw his cigar into the fire, and whispering to Mr. Price that they had come to "make it all right" for him, joined them at a table in the further end of the room.

It would appear, however, that matters were not going to be made all right quite so speedily as the young gentleman anticipated; for a very long conversation ensued, of which Mr. Pickwick could not avoid hearing certain angry fragments regarding dissolute conduct, and repeated forgiveness. At last, there were very distinct allusions made by the oldest gentleman of the party to one Whitecross Street, at which the young gentleman, notwithstanding his primeness and his spirit and his knowledge of life into the bargain, reclined his head upon the table, and howled dismally.

Very much satisfied with this sudden bringing down of the youth's valour, and this effectual lowering of his tone, Mr. Pickwick rang the bell, and was shown, at his own request, into a private room furnished with a carpet, table, chairs, sideboard and sofa, and ornamented with a looking-glass, and various old prints. Here, he had the advantage of hearing Mrs. Namby's performance on a square piano

over head, while the breakfast was getting ready ; when it came, Mr. Perker came too.

"Aha, my dear sir," said the little man, "nailed at last, eh? Come, come, I'm not sorry for it either, because now you'll see the absurdity of this conduct. I've noted down the amount of the taxed costs and damages for which the *ca-sa* was issued, and we had better settle at once and lose no time. Namby is come home by this time, I dare say. What say you, my dear sir? Shall I draw a cheque, or will you?" The little man rubbed his hands with affected cheerfulness as he said this, but glancing at Mr. Pickwick's countenance, could not forbear at the same time casting a desponding look towards Sam Weller.

"Perker," said Mr. Pickwick, "let me hear no more of this, I beg. I see no advantage in staying here, so I shall go to prison to-night."

"You can't go to Whitecross Street, my dear sir," said Perker. "Impossible! There are sixty beds in a ward; and the bolt's on, sixteen hours out of the four-and-twenty."

"I would rather go to some other place of confinement if I can," said Mr. Pickwick. "If not, I must make the best I can of that."

"You can go to the Fleet, my dear sir, if you're determined to go somewhere," said Perker.

"That'll do," said Mr. Pickwick. "I'll go there directly I have finished my breakfast."

"Stop, stop, my dear sir ; not the least occasion for being in such a violent hurry to get into a place that most other men are as eager to get out of," said the good-natured little attorney. "We must have a *habeas corpus*. There'll be no judge at chambers till four o'clock this afternoon. You must wait till then."

"Very good," said Mr. Pickwick, with unmoved patience. "Then we will have a chop, here, at two. See about it, Sam, and tell them to be punctual."

Mr. Pickwick remaining firm, despite all the remonstrances and arguments of Perker, the chops appeared and disappeared in due course ; he was then put into another hackney-coach, and carried off to Chancery Lane, after waiting half an hour or so for Mr. Namby, who had a select dinner-party and could on no account be disturbed before.

There were two judges in attendance at Sergeant's Inn—one King's Bench, and one Common Pleas—and a great deal

of business appeared to be transacting before them, if the number of lawyer's clerks who were hurrying in and out with bundles of papers, afforded any test. When they reached the low archway which forms the entrance to the Inn, Perker was detained a few moments parleying with the coachman about the fare and the change; and Mr. Pickwick, stepping to one side to be out of the way of the stream of people that were pouring in and out, looked about him with some curiosity.

The people that attracted his attention most, were three or four men of shabby-genteel appearance, who touched their hats to many of the attorneys who passed, and seemed to have some business there, the nature of which Mr. Pickwick could not divine. They were curious-looking fellows. One, was a slim and rather lame man in rusty black, and a white neckerchief; another was a stout burly person, dressed in the same apparel, with a great reddish-black cloth round his neck; a third, was a little weazen drunken-looking body, with a pimply face. They were loitering about, with their hands behind them, and now and then with an anxious countenance whispered something in the ear of some of the gentlemen with papers, as they hurried by. Mr. Pickwick remembered to have very often observed them lounging under the archway when he had been walking past; and his curiosity was quite excited to know to what branch of the profession these dingy-looking loungers could possibly belong.

He was about to propound the question to Namby, who kept close behind him, sucking a large gold ring on his little finger, when Perker bustled up, and observing that there was no time to lose, led the way into the Inn. As Mr. Pickwick followed, the lame man stepped up to him, and civilly touching his hat, held out a written card, which Mr. Pickwick, not wishing to hurt the man's feelings by refusing, courteously accepted and deposited in his waistcoat-pocket.

"Now," said Perker, turning round before he entered one of the offices, to see that his companions were close behind him. "In here, my dear sir. Hallo, what do *you* want?"

This last question was addressed to the lame man, who, unobserved by Mr. Pickwick, made one of the party. In reply to it, the lame man touched his hat again, with all imaginable politeness, and motioned towards Mr. Pickwick.

"No, no," said Perker with a smile. "We don't want you, my dear friend, we don't want you."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the lame man. "The gentleman took my card. I hope you will employ me, sir. The gentleman nodded to me. I'll be judged by the gentleman himself. You nodded to me, sir?"

"Pooh, pooh, nonsense. You didn't nod to anybody, Pickwick? A mistake, a mistake," said Perker.

"The gentleman handed me his card," replied Mr. Pickwick, producing it from his waistcoat-pocket. "I accepted it, as the gentleman seemed to wish it—in fact I had some curiosity to look at it when I should be at leisure. I——"

The little attorney burst into a loud laugh, and returning the card to the lame man, informing him it was all a mistake, whispered to Mr. Pickwick as the man turned away in dudgeon, that he was only a bail.

"A what!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"A bail!" replied Perker.

"A bail!"

"Yes, my dear sir—half a dozen of 'em here. Bail you to any amount, and only charge half-a-crown. Curious trade, isn't it?" said Perker, regaling himself with a pinch of snuff.

"What! Am I to understand that these men earn a livelihood by waiting about here, to perjure themselves before the judges of the land, at the rate of half-a-crown a crime!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, quite aghast at the disclosure.

"Why, I don't exactly know about perjury, my dear sir," replied the little gentleman. "Harsh word, my dear sir, very harsh word indeed. It's a legal fiction, my dear sir, nothing more." Saying which, the attorney shrugged his shoulders, smiled, took a second pinch of snuff, and led the way into the office of the judge's clerk.

This was a room of specially dirty appearance, with a very low ceiling and old panelled walls; and so badly lighted, that although it was broad day outside, great tallow candles were burning on the desks. At one end, was a door leading to the judge's private apartment, round which were congregated a crowd of attorneys and managing clerks, who were called in, in the order in which their respective appointments stood upon the file. Every time this door was opened to let a party out, the next party made a violent rush to get in; and, as in addition to the numerous dialogues which passed between the gentlemen who were waiting to see the

judge, a variety of personal squabbles ensued between the greater part of those who had seen him, there was as much noise as could well be raised in an apartment of such confined dimensions.

Nor were the conversations of these gentlemen the only sounds that broke upon the ear. Standing on a box behind a wooden bar at another end of the room, was a clerk in spectacles, who was "taking the affidavits:" large batches of which were, from time to time, carried into the private room by another clerk for the judge's signature. There were a large number of attorneys' clerks to be sworn, and it being a moral impossibility to swear them all at once, the struggles of these gentlemen to reach the clerk in spectacles, were like those of a crowd to get in at the pit door of a theatre when Gracious Majesty honours it with its presence. Another functionary, from time to time, exercised his lungs in calling over the names of those who had been sworn, for the purpose of restoring to them their affidavits after they had been signed by the judge: which gave rise to a few more scuffles; and all these things going on at the same time, occasioned as much bustle as the most active and excitable person could desire to behold. There were yet another class of persons—those who were waiting to attend summonses their employers had taken out, which it was optional to the attorney on the opposite side to attend or not—and whose business it was, from time to time, to cry out the opposite attorney's name, to make certain that he was not in attendance without their knowledge.

For example. Leaning against the wall, close beside the seat Mr. Pickwick had taken, was an office-lad of fourteen, with a tenor voice; near him, a common-law clerk with a bass one.

A clerk hurried in with a bundle of papers, and stared about him.

"Sniggle and Blink," cried the tenor.

"Porkin and Snob," growled the bass.

"Stumpy and Deacon," said the new comer.

Nobody answered; the next man who came in, was hailed by the whole three; and he in his turn shouted for another firm; and then somebody else roared in a loud voice for another; and so forth.

All this time, the man in spectacles was hard at work, swearing the clerks: the oath being invariably administered,

without any effort at punctuation, and usually in the following terms:

"Take the book in your right hand this is your name and hand-writing you swear that the contents of this your affidavit are true so help you God a shilling you must get change I haven't got it."

"Well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "I suppose they are getting the *habeas corpus* ready."

"Yes," said Sam, "and I wish they'd bring out the have-his-carcase. It's wery unpleasant keepin' us waitin' here. I'd ha' got half a dozen have-his-carcases ready, pack'd up and all, by this time."

What sort of cumbrous and unmanageable machine, Sam Weller imagined a *habeas corpus* to be, does not appear; for Perker, at that moment, walked up, and took Mr. Pickwick away.

The usual forms having been gone through, the body of Samuel Pickwick was soon afterwards confided to the custody of the tipstaff, to be by him taken to the Warden of the Fleet Prison, and there detained until the amount of the damages and costs in the action of Bardell against Pickwick was fully paid and satisfied.

"And that," said Mr. Pickwick, laughing, "will be a very long time. Sam, call another hackney-coach. Perker, my dear friend, good bye."

"I shall go with you, and see you safe there," said Perker.

"Indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick, "I would rather go without any other attendant than Sam. As soon as I get settled, I will write and let you know, and I shall expect you immediately. Until then, good bye."

As Mr. Pickwick said this, he got into the coach which had by this time arrived: followed by the tipstaff. Sam having stationed himself on the box, it rolled away.

"A most extraordinary man that!" said Perker, as he stopped to pull on his gloves.

"What a bankrupt he'd make, sir," observed Mr. Lowten, who was standing near. "How he would bother the commissioners! He'd set 'em at defiance if they talked of committing him, sir."

The attorney did not appear very much delighted with his clerk's professional estimate of Mr. Pickwick's character, for he walked away without deigning any reply.

The hackney-coach jolted along Fleet Street, as hackney-

coaches usually do. The horses "went better," the driver said, when they had anything before them, (they must have gone at a most extraordinary pace when there was nothing,) and so the vehicle kept behind a cart; when the cart stopped, it stopped; and when the cart went on again, it did the same. Mr. Pickwick sat opposite the tipstaff; and the tipstaff sat with his hat between his knees, whistling a tune and looking out of the coach window.

Time performs wonders. By the powerful old gentleman's aid, even a hackney-coach gets over half a mile of ground. They stopped at length, and Mr. Pickwick alighted at the gate of the Fleet.

The tipstaff, looking over his shoulder to see that his charge was following close at his heels, preceded Mr. Pickwick into the prison; turning to the left, after they had entered, they passed through an open door into a lobby, from which a heavy gate: opposite to that by which they had entered, and which was guarded by a stout turnkey with the key in his hand: led at once into the interior of the prison.

Here they stopped, while the tipstaff delivered his papers; and here Mr. Pickwick was apprised that he would remain, until he had undergone the ceremony, known to the initiated as "sitting for your portrait."

"Sitting for my portrait!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Having your likeness taken, sir," replied the stout turnkey. "We're capital hands at likenesses here. Take 'em in no time, and always exact. Walk in, sir, and make yourself at home."

Mr. Pickwick complied with the invitation, and sat himself down: when Mr. Weller, who stationed himself at the back of the chair, whispered that the sitting was merely another term for undergoing an inspection by the different turnkeys, in order that they might know prisoners from visitors.

"Well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "then I wish the artists would come. This is rather a public place."

"They vont be long, sir, I des-say," replied Sam. "There's a Dutch clock, sir."

"So I see," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"And a bird-cage, sir," says Sam. "Veels vithin veels, a prison in a prison. Ain't it, sir?"

As Mr. Weller made this philosophical remark, Mr. Pickwick was aware that his sitting had commenced. The stout

turnkey having been relieved from the lock, sat down, and looked at him carelessly, from time to time, while a long thin man who had relieved him, thrust his hands beneath his coat-tails, and planting himself opposite, took a good long view of him. A third rather surly-looking gentleman : who had apparently been disturbed at his tea, for he was disposing of the last remnant of a crust and butter when he came in : stationed himself close to Mr. Pickwick ; and, resting his hands on his hips, inspected him narrowly ; while two others mixed with the group, and studied his features with most intent and thoughtful faces. Mr. Pickwick winced a good deal under the operation, and appeared to sit very uneasily in his chair ; but he made no remark to anybody while it was being performed, not even to Sam, who reclined upon the back of the chair, reflecting, partly on the situation of his master, and partly on the great satisfaction it would have afforded him to make a fierce assault upon all the turnkeys there assembled, one after the other, if it were lawful and peaceable so to do.

At length the likeness was completed, and Mr. Pickwick was informed, that he might now proceed into the prison.

"Where am I to sleep to-night ?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why I don't rightly know about to-night," replied the stout turnkey. "You'll be chummed on somebody to-morrow, and then you'll be all snug and comfortable. The first night's generally rather unsettled, but you'll be set all squares to-morrow."

After some discussion, it was discovered that one of the turnkeys had a bed to let, which Mr. Pickwick could have for that night. He gladly agreed to hire it.

"If you'll come with me, I'll show it you at once," said the man. "It ain't a large 'un ; but it's an out-and-outer to sleep in. This way, sir."

They passed through the inner gate, and descended a short flight of steps. The key was turned after them : and Mr. Pickwick found himself, for the first time in his life, within the walls of a debtor's prison.



MR. PICKWICK SITS FOR HIS PORTRAIT

CHAPTER XLI

WHAT BEFELL MR. PICKWICK WHEN HE GOT INTO THE FLEET; WHAT PRISONERS HE SAW THERE; AND HOW HE PASSED THE NIGHT

MR. TOM ROKER, the gentleman who had accompanied Mr. Pickwick into the prison, turned sharp round to the right when he got to the bottom of the little flight of steps, and led the way, through an iron gate which stood open, and up another short flight of steps, into a long narrow gallery, dirty and low, paved with stone, and very dimly lighted by a window at each remote end.

"This," said the gentleman, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and looking carelessly over his shoulder to Mr. Pickwick, "This here is the hall flight."

"Oh," replied Mr. Pickwick, looking down a dark and filthy staircase, which appeared to lead to a range of damp and gloomy stone vaults, beneath the ground, "and those, I suppose, are the little cellars where the prisoners keep their small quantities of coals. Unpleasant places to have to go down to; but very convenient, I dare say."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder if they was convenient," replied the gentleman, "seeing that a few people live there, pretty snug. That's the Fair, that is."

"My friend," said Mr. Pickwick, "you don't really mean to say that human beings live down in those wretched dungeons?"

"Don't I?" replied Mr. Roker, with indignant astonishment; "why shouldn't I?"

"Live! Live down there!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Live down there! Yes, and die down there, too, very often!" replied Mr. Roker; "and what of that? Who's got to say anything agin it? Live down there! Yes, and a very good place it is to live in, ain't it?"

As Roker turned somewhat fiercely upon Mr. Pickwick in saying this, and, moreover muttered in an excited fashion certain unpleasant invocations concerning his own eyes, limbs, and circulating fluids, the latter gentleman deemed it advisable to pursue the discourse no further. Mr. Roker then proceeded to mount another staircase, as dirty as that which led to the place which had just been the subject of discussion, in which ascent he was closely followed by Mr. Pickwick and Sam.

"There," said Mr. Roker, pausing for breath when they reached another gallery of the same dimensions as the one below, "this is the coffee-room flight; the one above's the third, and the one above that's the top; and the room where you're a-going to sleep to-night is the warden's room, and it's this way—come on." Having said all this in a breath, Mr. Roker mounted another flight of stairs, with Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller following at his heels.

These staircases received light from sundry windows placed at some little distance above the floor, and looking into a gravelled area bounded by a high brick wall, with iron *chevaux-de-frise* at the top. This area, it appeared from Mr. Roker's statement, was the racket-ground; and it further appeared, on the testimony of the same gentleman, that there was a smaller area in that portion of the prison which was nearest Farringdon Street, denominated and called "the Painted Ground," from the fact of its walls having once displayed the semblances of various men-of-war in full sail, and other artistical effects achieved in bygone times by some imprisoned draughtsman in his leisure hours.

Having communicated this piece of information, apparently more for the purpose of discharging his bosom of an important fact, than with any specific view of enlightening Mr. Pickwick, the guide, having at length reached another gallery, led the way into a small passage at the extreme end: opened a door: and disclosed an apartment of an appearance by no means inviting, containing eight or nine iron bedsteads.

"There," said Mr. Roker, holding the door open, and looking triumphantly round at Mr. Pickwick, "there's a room!"

Mr. Pickwick's face, however, betokened such a very trifling portion of satisfaction at the appearance of his lodging, that Mr. Roker looked for a reciprocity of feeling into the countenance of Samuel Weller, who, until now, had observed a dignified silence.

"There's a room, young man," observed Mr. Roker.

"I see it," replied Sam, with a placid nod of the head.

"You wouldn't think to find such a room as this in the Farringdon Hotel, would you?" said Mr. Roker, with a complacent smile.

To this Mr. Weller replied with an easy and unstudied closing of one eye; which might be considered to mean, either that he would have thought it, or that he would not have thought it, or that he had never thought anything at all about it: as the observer's imagination suggested. Having executed this feat, and re-opened his eye, Mr. Weller proceeded to inquire which was the individual bedstead that Mr. Roker had so flatteringly described as an out-an-outer to sleep in.

"That's it," replied Mr. Roker, pointing to a very rusty one in a corner. "It would make any one go to sleep, that bedstead would, whether they wanted to or not."

"I should think," said Sam, eyeing the piece of furniture in question with a look of excessive disgust, "I should think poppies was nothing to it."

"Nothing at all," said Mr. Roker.

"And I s'pose," said Sam, with a sidelong glance at his master, as if to see whether there were any symptoms of his determination being shaken by what passed, "I s'pose the other gen'l'men as sleeps here, *are* gen'l'men."

"Nothing but it," said Mr. Roker. "One of 'em takes his twelve pints of ale a-day, and never leaves off smoking even at his meals."

"He must be a first-rater," said Sam.

"A, r," replied Mr. Roker.

Nothing daunted, even by this intelligence, Mr. Pickwick smilingly announced his determination to test the powers of the narcotic bedstead for that night; and Mr. Roker, after informing him that he could retire to rest at whatever hour he thought proper, without any further notice or formality, walked off, leaving him standing with Sam in the gallery.

It was getting dark; that is to say, a few gas jets were kindled in this place which was never light, by way of compliment to the evening, which had set in outside. As it was rather warm, some of the tenants of the numerous little rooms which opened into the gallery on either hand, had set their doors ajar. Mr. Pickwick peeped into them as he passed along, with great curiosity and interest. Here four or five

great hulking fellows, just visible through a cloud of tobacco-smoke, were engaged in noisy and riotous conversation over half-emptied pots of beer, or playing at all-fours with a very greasy pack of cards. In the adjoining room, some solitary tenant might be seen, poring, by the light of a feeble tallow candle, over a bundle of soiled and tattered papers, yellow with dust and dropping to pieces from age: writing, for the hundredth time, some lengthened statement of his grievances, for the perusal of some great man whose eyes it would never reach, or whose heart it would never touch. In a third, a man, with his wife and a whole crowd of children, might be seen making up a scanty bed on the ground, or upon a few chairs, for the younger ones to pass the night in. And in a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth, and a seventh, the noise, and the beer, and the tobacco-smoke, and the cards, all came over again in greater force than before.

In the galleries themselves, and more especially on the staircases, there lingered a great number of people, who came there, some because their rooms were empty and lonesome, others because their rooms were full and hot: the greater part because they were restless and uncomfortable, and not possessed of the secret of exactly knowing what to do with themselves. There were many classes of people here, from the labouring man in his fustian jacket, to the broken-down spendthrift in his shawl dressing-gown, most appropriately out at elbows; but there was the same air about them all—a listless jail-bird careless swagger, a vagabondish who's-afraid sort of bearing, which is wholly indescribable in words, but which any man can understand in one moment if he wish, by setting foot in the nearest debtor's prison, and looking at the very first group of people he sees there, with the same interest as Mr. Pickwick did.

"It strikes me, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, leaning over the iron-rail at the stairhead, "It strikes me, Sam, that imprisonment for debt is scarcely any punishment at all."

"Think not, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"You see how these fellows drink, and smoke, and roar," replied Mr. Pickwick. "It's quite impossible that they can mind it much."

"Ah, that's just the very thing, sir," rejoined Sam, "*they* don't mind it; it's a regular holiday to them—all porter and skittles. It's the t'other vuns as gets done over, vith this sort o' thing: them down-hearted fellers as can't svig

away at the beer, nor play at skittles neither; them as would pay if they could, and gets low by being boxed up. I'll tell you wot it is, sir; them as is always a idlin' in public-houses it don't damage at all, and them as is always a workin' wen they can, it damages too much. 'It's unekal,' as my father used to say wen his grog warn't made half-and-half: 'It's unekal, and that's the fault on it.'"

"I think you're right, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, after a few moments' reflection, "qui e right"

"P'raps, now and then, there's some honest people as likes it," observed Mr. Weller, in a ruminative tone, "but I never heerd o' one as I can call to mind, 'cept the little dirty-faced man in the brown coat; and that was force of habit."

"And who was he?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Wy, that's just the wery point as nobody never know'd." replied Sam.

"But what did he do?"

"Wy, he did wot many men as has been much better know'd has done in their time, sir," replied Sam, "he run a match agin the constable, and vun it."

"In other words, I suppose," said Mr. Pickwick, "he got into debt."

"Just that, sir," replied Sam, "and in course o' time he come here in consekens. It warn't much—execution for nine pound nothin', multiplied by five for costs; but hows'ever here he stopped for seventeen year. If he got any wrinkles in his face, they was stopped up vith the dirt, for both the dirty face and the brown coat was just the same at the end o' that time as they was at the beginnin'. He was a wery peaceful inoffendin' little creetur, and was always a bustlin' about for somebody, or playin' rackets and never vinnin'; till at last the turnkeys they got quite fond on him, and he was in the lodge ev'ry night, a chattering vith 'em, and tellin' stories, and all that 'ere. Vun night he was in there as usual, along vith a wery old friend of his, as was on the lock, ven he says all of a sudden, 'I ain't seen the market outside, Bill,' he says (Fleet Market was there at that time) —'I ain't seen the market outside, Bill,' he says, 'for seventeen year.' 'I know you ain't,' says the turnkey, smoking his pipe. 'I should like to see it for a minit, Bill,' he says. 'Wery probable,' says the turnkey, smoking his pipe wery fierce, and making believe he warn't up to wot the little man wanted. 'Bill,' says the little man, more abrupt than

afore, 'I've got the fancy in my head. Let me see the public streets once more afore I die; and if I ain't struck with apoplexy, I'll be back in five minits by the clock.' 'And wot 'ud become o' me if you *wos* struck with apoplexy?' said the turnkey. 'Wy,' says the little creetur, 'whoever found me, 'ud bring me home, for I've got my card in my pocket, Bill,' he says, 'No. 20, Coffee-room Flight:' and that wos true, sure enough, for wen he wanted to make the acquaintance of any new comer, he used to pull out a little limp card with them words on it and nothin' else; in consideration of vich, he wos always called Number Twenty. The turnkey takes a fixed look at him, and at last he says in a solemn manner, 'Tventy,' he says, 'I'll trust you; you won't get your old friend into trouble.' 'No, my boy; I hope I've somethin' better behind here,' says the little man; and as he said it he hit his little veskit wery hard, and then a tear started out o' each eye, which wos wery extraordinary, for it wos supposed as water never touched his face. He shook the turnkey by the hand; out he vent——"

"And never came back again," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Wrong for vunce, sir," replied Mr. Weller, "for back he come, two minits afore the time, a bilin' with rage: sayin' how he'd been nearly run over by a hackney-coach: that he warn't used to it: and he was blowed if he wouldn't write to the Lord Mayor. They got him pacified at last; and for five years arter that, he never even so much as peeped out o' the lodge-gate."

"At the expiration of that time he died, I suppose," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No he didn't, sir," replied Sam. "He got a curiosity to go and taste the beer at a new public-house over the way, and it wos such a wery nice parlour, that he took it into his head to go there every night, wich he did for a long time, always comin' back reg'lar about a quarter of an hour afore the gate shut, wich wos all wery snug and comfortable. At last he began to get so precious jolly, that he used to forget how the time vent, or care nothin' at all about it, and he vent on gettin' later and later, till vun night his old friend wos just a shuttin' the gate—had turned the key in fact—wen he come up. 'Hold hard, Bill,' he says. 'Wot, ain't you come home yet, Twenty?' says the turnkey, 'I thought you wos in, long ago.' 'No I wasn't,' says the little man, with a smile. 'Well then, I'll tell you wot it is, my friend,' says the turn-

key, openin' the gate wery slow and sulky, 'it's my 'pinion as you've got into bad company o' late, wich I'm wery sorry to see. Now, I don't wish to do nothing harsh,' he says, 'but if you can't confine yourself to steady circles, and find your way back at reg'lar hours, as sure as you're a standin' there, I'll shut you out altogether!' The little man was seized with a wiolet fit o' tremblin', and never vent outside the prison walls arterwards!"

As Sam concluded, Mr. Pickwick slowly retraced his steps down-stairs. After a few thoughtful turns in the Painted Ground, which, as it was now dark, was nearly deserted, he intimated to Mr. Weller that he thought it high time for him to withdraw for the night; requesting him to seek a bed in some adjacent public-house, and return early in the morning, to make arrangements for the removal of his master's wardrobe from the George and Vulture. This request Mr. Samuel Weller prepared to obey, with as good a grace as he could assume, but with a very considerable show of reluctance nevertheless. He even went so far as to essay sundry ineffectual hints regarding the expediency of stretching himself on the gravel for that night; but finding Mr. Pickwick obstinately deaf to any such suggestions, finally withdrew.

There is no disguising the fact that Mr. Pickwick felt very low-spirited and uncomfortable; not for lack of society, for the prison was very full, and a bottle of wine would at once have purchased the utmost good-fellowship of a few choice spirits, without any more formal ceremony of introduction; but he was alone in the coarse vulgar crowd, and felt the depression of spirit and sinking of heart, naturally consequent on the reflection that he was cooped and caged up, without a prospect of liberation. As to the idea of releasing himself by ministering to the sharpness of Dodson and Fogg, it never for an instant entered his thoughts.

In this frame of mind he turned again into the coffee-room gallery, and walked slowly to and fro. The place was intolerably dirty, and the smell of tobacco-smoke perfectly suffocating. There was a perpetual slamming and banging of doors as the people went in and out; and the noise of their voices and footsteps echoed and re-echoed through the passages constantly. A young woman, with a child in her arms, who seemed scarcely able to crawl, from emaciation and misery, was walking up and down the passage in conver-

sation with her husband, who had no other place to see her in. As they passed Mr. Pickwick, he could hear the female sob; and once she burst into such a passion of grief, that she was compelled to lean against the wall for support, while the man took the child in his arms, and tried to soothe her.

Mr. Pickwick's heart was really too full to bear it, and he went up-stairs to bed.

Now, although the warden's room was a very uncomfortable one (being, in every point of decoration and convenience, several hundred degrees inferior to the common infirmary of a county gaol), it had at present the merit of being wholly deserted save by Mr. Pickwick himself. So, he sat down at the foot of his little iron bedstead, and began to wonder how much a year the warden made out of the dirty room. Having satisfied himself, by mathematical calculation, that the apartment was about equal in annual value to the freehold of a small street in the suburbs of London, he took to wondering what possible temptation could have induced a dingy-looking fly that was crawling over his pantaloons, to come into a close prison, when he had the choice of so many airy situations—a course of meditation which led him to the irresistible conclusion that the insect was mad. After settling this point, he began to be conscious that he was getting sleepy; whereupon he took his nightcap out of the pocket in which he had had the precaution to stow it in the morning, and, leisurely undressing himself, got into bed, and fell asleep.

"Bravo! Heel over toe—cut and shuffle—pay away at it, Zephyr! I'm smothered if the Opera House isn't your proper hemisphere. Keep it up! Hooray!" These expressions, delivered in a most boisterous tone, and accompanied with loud peals of laughter, roused Mr. Pickwick from one of those sound slumbers which, lasting in reality some half hour, seem to the sleeper to have been protracted for three weeks or a month.

The voice had no sooner ceased than the room was shaken with such violence that the windows rattled in their frames, and the bedsteads trembled again. Mr. Pickwick started up, and remained for some minutes fixed in mute astonishment at the scene before him.

On the floor of the room, a man in a broad-skirted green coat, with corduroy knee smalls and grey cotton stockings, was performing the most popular steps of a hornpipe, with a slang and burlesque caricature of grace and lightness,



THE WARDEN'S ROOM

which, combined with the very appropriate character of his costume, was inexpressibly absurd. Another man, evidently very drunk, who had probably been tumbled into bed by his companions, was sitting up between the sheets, warbling as much as he could recollect of a comic song, with the most intensely sentimental feeling and expression; while a third, seated on one of the bedsteads, was applauding both performers with the air of a profound connoisseur, and encouraging them by such ebullitions of feeling as had already roused Mr. Pickwick from his sleep.

This last man was an admirable specimen of a class of gentry which never can be seen in full perfection but in such places;—they may be met with, in an imperfect state, occasionally about stable-yards and public-houses; but they never attain their full bloom except in these hot-beds, which would almost seem to be considerably provided by the Legislature for the sole purpose of rearing them.

He was a tall fellow, with an olive complexion, long dark hair, and very thick bushy whiskers meeting under his chin. He wore no neckerchief, as he had been playing rackets all day, and his open shirt collar displayed their full luxuriance. On his head he wore one of the common eighteenpenny French skull-caps, with a gawdy tassel dangling therefrom, very happily in keeping with a common fustian coat. His legs—which, being long, were afflicted with weakness—graced a pair of Oxford-mixture trousers, made to show the full symmetry of those limbs. Being somewhat negligently braced, however, and, moreover, but imperfectly buttoned, they fell in a series of not the most graceful folds over a pair of shoes sufficiently down at heel to display a pair of very soiled white stockings. There was a rakish, vagabond smartness, and a kind of boastful rascality, about the whole man, that was worth a mine of gold.

This figure was the first to perceive that Mr. Pickwick was looking on; upon which he winked to the Zephyr, and entreated him, with mock gravity, not to wake the gentleman.

“Why, bless the gentleman’s honest heart and soul!” said the Zephyr, turning round and affecting the extremity of surprise; “the gentleman is awake. Hem, Shakespeare! How do you do, sir? How is Mary and Sarah, sir? and the dear old lady at home, sir? Will you have the kindness to put my compliments into the first little parcel you’re

sending that way, sir, and say that I would have sent 'em before, only I was afraid they might be broker. in the waggon, sir?"

"Don't overwhelm the gentleman with ordinary civilities when you see he's anxious to have something to drink," said the gentleman with the whiskers, with a jocosse air. "Why don't you ask the gentleman what he'll take?"

"Dear me, I quite forgot," replied the other. "What *will* you take, sir? Will you take port wine, sir, or sherry wine, sir? I can recommend the ale, sir; or perhaps you'd like to taste the porter, sir? Allow me to have the felicity of hanging up your nightcap, sir."

With this, the speaker snatched that article of dress from Mr. Pickwick's head, and fixed it in a twinkling on that of the drunken man, who, firmly impressed with the belief that he was delighting a numerous assembly, continued to hammer away at the comic song in the most melancholy strains imaginable.

Taking a man's nightcap from his brow by violent means, and adjusting it on the head of an unknown gentleman of dirty exterior, however ingenious a witticism in itself, is unquestionably one of those which come under the denomination of practical jokes. Viewing the matter precisely in this light, Mr. Pickwick, without the slightest intimation of his purpose, sprang vigorously out of bed, struck the Zephyr so smart a blow in the chest as to deprive him of a considerable portion of the commodity which sometimes bears his name, and then, recapturing his nightcap, boldly placed himself in an attitude of defence.

"Now," said Mr. Pickwick, gasping no less from excitement than from the expenditure of so much energy, "come on—both of you—both of you!" With this liberal invitation the worthy gentleman communicated a revolving motion to his clenched fists, by way of appalling his antagonists with a display of science.

It might have been Mr. Pickwick's very unexpected gallantry, or it might have been the complicated manner in which he had got himself out of bed, and fallen all in a mass upon the hornpipe man, that touched his adversaries. Touched they were; for, instead of then and there making an attempt to commit manslaughter, as Mr. Pickwick implicitly believed they would have done, they paused, stared at each other a short time, and finally laughed outright.

"Well; you're a trump, and I like you all the better for it," said the Zephyr. "Now jump into bed again, or you'll catch the rheumatics. No malice, I hope?" said the man, extending a hand the size of the yellow clump of fingers which sometimes swing over a glover's door.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Pickwick with great alacrity; for, now that the excitement was over, he began to feel rather cool about the legs.

"Allow me the honour," said the gentleman with the whiskers, presenting his dexter hand, and aspirating the *h*.

"With much pleasure, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; and having executed a very long and solemn shake, he got into bed again.

"My name is Smangle, sir," said the man with the whiskers.

"Oh," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Mine is Mivins," said the man in the stockings.

"I am delighted to hear it, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Hem," coughed Mr. Smangle.

"Did you speak, sir?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"No, I did not, sir," said Mr. Smangle.

"I thought you did, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

All this was very genteel and pleasant; and, to make matters still more comfortable, Mr. Smangle assured Mr. Pickwick a great many times that he entertained a very high respect for the feelings of a gentleman; which sentiment, indeed, did him infinite credit, as he could be in no wise supposed to understand them.

"Are you going through the Court, sir?" inquired Mr. Smangle.

"Through the what?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Through the Court—Portugal Street—the Court for the Relief of—you know."

"Oh, no," replied Mr. Pickwick. "No, I am not."

"Going out, perhaps?" suggested Mivins.

"I fear not," replied Mr. Pickwick. "I refuse to pay some damages, and am here in consequence."

"Ah," said Mr. Smangle, "paper has been my ruin."

"A stationer, I presume, sir?" said Mr. Pickwick, innocently.

"Stationer! No, no; confound and curse me! Not so low as that. No trade. When I say paper, I mean bills."

"Oh, you use the word in that sense. I see," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Damme! A gentleman must expect reverses," said Smangle. "What of that? Here am I in the Fleet Prison. Well; good. What then? I'm none the worse for that, am I?"

"Not a bit," replied Mr. Mivins. And he was quite right, for, so far from Mr. Smangle being any the worse for it, he was something the better, inasmuch as to qualify himself for the place, he had attained gratuitous possession of certain articles of jewellery, which, long before that, had found their way to the pawnbroker's.

"Well; but come," said Mr. Smangle; "this is dry work. Let's rinse our mouths with a drop of burnt sherry; the last comer shall stand it, Mivins shall fetch it, and I'll help to drink it. That's a fair and gentlemanlike division of labour, anyhow. Curse me!"

Unwilling to hazard another quarrel, Mr. Pickwick gladly assented to the proposition, and consigned the money to Mr. Mivins, who, as it was nearly eleven o'clock, lost no time in repairing to the coffee-room on his errand.

"I say," whispered Smangle, the moment his friend had left the room; "what did you give him?"

"Half a sovereign," said Mr. Pickwick.

"He's a devilish pleasant gentlemanly dog," said Mr. Smangle;—"infernal pleasant. I don't know anybody more so; but——" Here Mr. Smangle stopped short, and shook his head dubiously.

"You don't think there is any probability of his appropriating the money to his own use?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, no! Mind, I don't say that; I expressly say that he's a devilish gentlemanly fellow," said Mr. Smangle. "But I think, perhaps, if somebody went down, just to see that he didn't dip his beak into the jug by accident, or make some confounded mistake in losing the money as he came up-stairs, it would be as well. Here, you sir, just run down-stairs, and look after that gentleman, will you?"

This request was addressed to a little timid-looking nervous man, whose appearance bespoke great poverty, and who had been crouching on his bedstead all this while, apparently stupefied by the novelty of his situation.

"You know where the coffee-room is," said Smangle; "just run down, and tell that gentleman you've come to help

him up with the jug. Or—stop—I'll tell you what—I'll tell you how we'll do him," said Smangle, with a cunning look.

"How?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Send down word that he's to spend the change in cigars. Capital thought. Run and tell him that; d'ye hear? They shan't be wasted," continued Smangle, turning to Mr. Pickwick. "*I'll smoke 'em.*"

This manœuvring was so exceedingly ingenious, and, withal, performed with such immovable composure and coolness, that Mr. Pickwick would have had no wish to disturb it, even if he had had the power. In a short time Mr. Mivins returned, bearing the sherry, which Mr. Smangle dispensed in two little cracked mugs: considerably remarking, with reference to himself that a gentleman must not be particular under such circumstances, and that, for his part, he was not too proud to drink out of the jug. In which, to show his sincerity, he forthwith pledged the company in a draught which half emptied it.

An excellent understanding having been by these means promoted, Mr. Smangle proceeded to entertain his hearers with a relation of divers romantic adventures in which he had been from time to time engaged, involving various interesting anecdotes of a thorough-bred horse, and a magnificent Jewess, both of surpassing beauty, and much coveted by the nobility and gentry of these kingdoms.

Long before these elegant extracts from the biography of a gentleman were concluded, Mr. Mivins had betaken himself to bed, and had set in snoring for the night: leaving the timid stranger and Mr. Pickwick to the full benefit of Mr. Smangle's experiences.

Nor were the two last-named gentlemen as much edified as they might have been, by the moving passages narrated. Mr. Pickwick had been in a state of slumber for some time, when he had a faint perception of the drunken man bursting out afresh with the comic song, and receiving from Mr. Smangle a gentle intimation, through the medium of the water-jug, that his audience were not musically disposed. Mr. Pickwick then once again dropped off to sleep, with a confused consciousness that Mr. Smangle was still engaged in relating a long story, the chief point of which appeared to be, that, on some occasion particularly stated and set forth, he had "done" a bill and a gentleman at the same time.

CHAPTER XLII

ILLUSTRATIVE, LIKE THE PRECEDING ONE, OF THE OLD PROVERB, THAT ADVERSITY BRINGS A MAN ACQUAINTED WITH STRANGE BED-FELLOWS. LIKEWISE CONTAINING MR. PICKWICK'S EXTRAORDINARY AND STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT TO MR. SAMUEL WELLER

WHEN Mr. Pickwick opened his eyes next morning, the first object upon which they rested was Samuel Weller, seated upon a small black portmanteau, intently regarding, apparently in a condition of profound abstraction, the stately figure of the dashing Mr. Smangle: while Mr. Smangle himself, who was already partially dressed, was seated on his bedstead, occupied in the desperately hopeless attempt of staring Mr. Weller out of countenance. We say desperately hopeless, because Sam, with a comprehensive gaze which took in Mr. Smangle's cap, feet, head, face, legs, and whiskers, all at the same time, continued to look steadily on, with every demonstration of lively satisfaction, but with no more regard to Mr. Smangle's personal sentiments on the subject than he would have displayed had he been inspecting a wooden statue, or a straw-embowelled Guy Faux.

"Well; will you know me again?" said Mr. Smangle, with a frown.

"I'd swear to you anyveres, sir," replied Sam, cheerfully.

"Don't be impertinent to a gentleman, sir," said Mr. Smangle.

"Not on no account," replied Sam. "If you'll tell me wen he wakes, I'll be upon the wery best extra-super behaviour!" This observation, having a remote tendency to imply that Mr. Smangle was no gentleman, kindled his ire.

"Mivins!" said Mr. Smangle, with a passionate air.

"What's the office?" replied that gentleman from his couch.

"Who the devil is this fellow?"

"Gad," said Mr. Mivins, looking lazily out from under the bed-clothes, "I ought to ask *you* that. Hasn't he any business here?"

"No," replied Mr. Smangle.

"Then knock him down-stairs, and tell him not to presume to get up till I come and kick him," rejoined Mr. Mivins; with this prompt advice that excellent gentleman again betook himself to slumber.

The conversation exhibiting these unequivocal symptoms of verging on the personal, Mr. Pickwick deemed it a fit point at which to interpose.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Sir," rejoined that gentleman.

"Has anything new occurred since last night?"

"Nothin' partickler, sir," replied Sam, glancing at Mr. Smangle's whiskers; "the late prewailance of a close and confined atmosphere has been rayther favourable to the growth of veeds, of an alarmin' and sangvinary natur; but vith that 'ere exception things is quiet enough."

"I shall get up," said Mr. Pickwick; "give me some clean things."

Whatever hostile intentions Mr. Smangle might have entertained, his thoughts were speedily diverted by the unpacking of the portmanteau; the contents of which appeared to impress him at once with a most favourable opinion, not only of Mr. Pickwick, but of Sam also, who, he took an early opportunity of declaring in a tone of voice loud enough for that eccentric personage to overhear, was a regular thorough-bred original, and consequently the very man after his own heart. As to Mr. Pickwick, the affection he conceived for him knew no limits.

"Now is there anything I can do for you, my dear sir?" said Smangle.

"Nothing that I am aware of, I am obliged to you," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"No linen that you want sent to the washerwoman's? I know a delightful washerwoman outside, that comes for my things twice a week; and, by Jove!—how devilish lucky!—this is the day she calls. Shall I put any of those little things up with mine? Don't say anything about the trouble. Confound and curse it! if one gentleman under a cloud, is not to put himself a little out of the way to

assist another gentleman in the same condition, what's human nature?"

Thus spake Mr. Smangle, edging himself meanwhile as near as possible to the portmanteau, and beaming forth looks of the most fervent and disinterested friendship.

"There's nothing you want to give out for the man to brush, my dear creature, is there?" resumed Smangle.

"Nothin' whatever, my fine feller," rejoined Sam, taking the reply into his own mouth. "P'raps if vun of us wos to brush, without troubling the man, it 'ud be more agreeable for all parties, as the schoolmaster said wen the young gentleman objected to being flogged by the butler."

"And there's nothing that I can send in my little box to the washerwoman's, is there?" said Smangle, turning from Sam to Mr. Pickwick, with an air of some discomfiture.

"Nothin' whatever, sir," retorted Sam; "I'm afeerd the little box must be chock full o' your own as it is."

This speech was accompanied with such a very expressive look at that particular portion of Mr. Smangle's attire, by the appearance of which the skill of laundresses in getting up gentlemen's linen is generally tested, that he was fain to turn upon his heel, and, for the present at any rate, to give up all design on Mr. Pickwick's purse and wardrobe. He accordingly retired in dudgeon to the racket-ground, where he made a light and wholesome breakfast on a couple of the cigars which had been purchased on the previous night.

Mr. Mivins, who was no smoker, and whose account for small articles of chandlery had also reached down to the bottom of the slate, and been "carried over" to the other side, remained in bed, and, in his own words, "took it out in sleep."

After breakfasting in a small closet attached to the coffee-room, which bore the imposing title of the Snuggery; the temporary inmate of which, in consideration of a small additional charge, had the unspeakable advantage of over-hearing all the conversation in the coffee-room aforesaid; and after dispatching Mr. Weller on some necessary errands, Mr. Pickwick repaired to the Lodge, to consult Mr. Roker concerning his future accommodation.

"Accommodation, eh?" said that gentleman, consulting a large book. "Plenty of that, Mr. Pickwick. Your chummage ticket will be on twenty-seven, in the third."

"Oh," said Mr. Pickwick. "My what, did you say?"

"Your chummage ticket," replied Mr. Roker; "you're up to that?"

"Not quite," replied Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"Why," said Mr. Roker, "it's as plain as Salisbury. You'll have a chummage ticket upon twenty-seven in the third, and them as is in the room will be your chums."

"Aie there many of them?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, dubiously.

"Three," replied Mr. Roker.

Mr. Pickwick coughed.

"One of 'em's a parson," said Mr. Roker, filling up a little piece of paper as he spoke; "another's a butcher."

"Eh?" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"A butcher," repeated Mr. Roker, giving the nib of his pen a tap on the desk to cure it of a disinclination to mark. "What a thorough-paced goer he used to be sure-ly! You remember Tom Martin, Neddy?" said Roker, appealing to another man in the lodge, who was paring the mud off his shoes with a five-and-twenty bladed pocket knife.

"I should think so," replied the party addressed, with a strong emphasis on the personal pronoun.

"Bless my dear eyes!" said Mr. Roker, shaking his head slowly from side to side, and gazing abstractedly out of the grated windows before him, as if he were fondly recalling some peaceful scene of his early youth; "it seems but yesterday that he whopped the coal-heaver down Fox-under-the-Hill by the wharf there. I think I can see him now, a coming up the Strand between the two street-keepers, a little sobered by the bruising, with a patch o' winegar and brown paper over his right eyelid, and that 'ere lovely bulldog, as pinned the little boy arterwards, a following at his heels. What a rum thing Time is, ain't it, Neddy?"

The gentleman to whom these observations were addressed, who appeared of a taciturn and thoughtful cast, merely echoed the inquiry; Mr. Roker, shaking off the poetical and gloomy train of thought into which he had been betrayed, descended to the common business of life, and resumed his pen.

"Do you know what the third gentleman is?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, not very much gratified by this description of his future associates.

"What is that Simpson, Neddy?" said Mr. Roker, turning to his companion.

"What Simpson?" said Neddy.

"Why him in twenty-seven in the third, that this gentleman's going to be chummed on."

"Oh, him!" replied Neddy: "he's nothing exactly. He *was* a horse chaunter: he's a leg now."

"Ah, so I thought," rejoined Mr. Roker, closing the book, and placing the small piece of paper in Mr. Pickwick's hands. "That's the ticket, sir."

Very much perplexed by this summary disposition of his person, Mr. Pickwick walked back into the prison, revolving in his mind what he had better do. Convinced, however, that before he took any other steps it would be advisable to see, and hold personal converse with, the three gentlemen with whom it was proposed to quarter him, he made the best of his way to the third flight.

After groping about in the gallery for some time, attempting in the dim light to decipher the numbers on the different doors, he at length appealed to a potboy, who happened to be pursuing his morning occupation of gleaning for pewter.

"Which is twenty-seven, my good fellow?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Five doors further on," replied the potboy. "There's the likeness of a man being hung, and smoking a pipe the while, chalked outside the door."

Guided by this direction, Mr. Pickwick proceeded slowly along the gallery until he encountered the "portrait of a gentleman," above described, upon whose countenance he tapped, with the knuckle of his fore-finger—gently at first, and then audibly. After repeating this process several times without effect, he ventured to open the door and peep in.

There was only one man in the room, and he was leaning out of window as far as he could without overbalancing himself, endeavouring, with great perseverance, to spit upon the crown of the hat of a personal friend on the parade below. As neither speaking, coughing, sneezing, knocking, nor any other ordinary mode of attracting attention, made this person aware of the presence of a visitor, Mr. Pickwick, after some delay, stepped up to the window, and pulled him gently by the coat-tail. The individual brought in his head and shoulders with great swiftness, and surveying Mr. Pickwick from head to foot, demanded in a surly tone what the—something beginning with a capital H—he wanted.

"I believe," said Mr. Pickwick, consulting his ticket, "I believe this is twenty-seven in the third?"

"Well?" replied the gentleman.

"I have come here in consequence of receiving this bit of paper," rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

"Hand it over," said the gentleman.

Mr. Pickwick complied.

"I think Roker might have chummed you somewhere else," said Mr. Simpson (for it was the leg), after a very discontented sort of a pause.

Mr. Pickwick thought so also; but, under all the circumstances, he considered it a matter of sound policy to be silent.

Mr. Simpson mused for a few moments after this, and then, thrusting his head out of the window, gave a shrill whistle, and pronounced some word aloud, several times. What the word was, Mr. Pickwick could not distinguish; but he rather inferred that it must be some nickname which distinguished Mr. Martin: from the fact of a great number of gentlemen on the ground below, immediately proceeding to cry "Butcher!" in imitation of the tone in which that useful class of society are wont, diurnally, to make their presence known at area railings.

Subsequent occurrences confirmed the accuracy of Mr. Pickwick's impression; for, in a few seconds, a gentleman, prematurely broad for his years: clothed in a professional blue jean frock, and top-boots with circular toes: entered the room nearly out of breath, closely followed by another gentleman in very shabby black, and a seal-skin cap. The latter gentleman, who fastened his coat all the way up to his chin by means of a pin and a button alternately, had a very coarse red face, and looked like a drunken chaplain; which, indeed, he was.

These two gentlemen having by turns perused Mr. Pickwick's billet, the one expressed his opinion that it was "a rig," and the other his conviction that it was "a go." Having recorded their feelings in these very intelligible terms, they looked at Mr. Pickwick and each other in awkward silence.

"It's an aggravating thing, just as we got the beds so snug," said the chaplain, looking at three dirty mattresses, each rolled up in a blanket: which occupied one corner of the room during the day, and formed a kind of slab, on

which were placed an old cracked basin, ewer, and soap-dish, of common yellow earthenware, with a blue flower: "Very aggravating."

Mr. Martin expressed the same opinion in rather stronger terms; Mr. Simpson, after having let a variety of expletive adjectives loose upon society without any substantive to accompany them, tucked up his sleeves, and began to wash the greens for dinner.

While this was going on, Mr. Pickwick had been eyeing the room, which was filthily dirty, and smelt intolerably close. There was no vestige of either carpet, curtain, or blind. There was not even a closet in it. Unquestionably there were but few things to put away, if there had been one; but, however few in number, or small in individual amount, still, remnants of loaves and pieces of cheese, and damp towels, and scrags of meat, and articles of wearing apparel, and mutilated crockery, and bellows without nozzles, and toasting-forks without prongs, do present somewhat of an uncomfortable appearance when they are scattered about the floor of a small apartment, which is the common sitting and sleeping room of three idle men.

"I suppose this can be managed somehow," said the butcher, after a pretty long silence. "What will you take to go out?"

"I beg your pardon," replied Mr. Pickwick. "What did you say? I hardly understand you."

"What will you take to be paid out?" said the butcher. "The regular chummage is two-and-six. Will you take three bob?"

"—And a bender," suggested the clerical gentleman.

"Well, I don't mind that; it's only twopence a-piece more," said Mr. Martin.

"What do you say, now?" We'll pay you out for three-and-sixpence a week. Come!"

"And stand a gallon of beer down," chimed in Mr. Simpson. "There!"

"And drink it on the spot," said the chaplain. "Now!"

"I really am so wholly ignorant of the rules of this place," returned Mr. Pickwick, "that I do not yet comprehend you. Can I live anywhere else? I thought I could not."

At this inquiry Mr. Martin looked, with a countenance of excessive surprise, at his two friends, and then each gentleman pointed with his right thumb over his left shoulder.

This action, imperfectly described in words by the very feeble term of "over the left," when performed by any number of ladies or gentlemen who are accustomed to act in unison, has a very graceful and airy effect ; its expression is one of light and playful sarcasm.

"*Can you !*" repeated Mr. Martin, with a smile of pity.

"Well, if I knew as little of life as that, I'd eat my hat and swallow the buckle whole," said the clerical gentleman.

"So would I," added the sporting one, solemnly.

After this introductory preface, the three chums informed Mr. Pickwick, in a breath, that money was, in the Fleet, just what money was out of it ; that it would instantly procure him almost anything he desired ; and that, supposing he had it, and had no objection to spend it, if he only signified his wish to have a room to himself, he might take possession of one, furnished and fitted to boot, in half an hour's time.

With this, the parties separated, very much to their common satisfaction : Mr. Pickwick once more retracing his steps to the lodge : and the three companions adjourning to the coffee-room, there to spend the five shillings which the clerical gentleman had, with admirable prudence and foresight, borrowed of him for the purpose.

"I knowed it !" said Mr. Roker, with a chuckle, when Mr. Pickwick stated the object with which he had returned. "Didn't I say so, Neddy ?"

The philosophical owner of the universal penknife, growled an affirmative.

"I knowed you'd want a room for yourself, bless you !" said Mr. Roker. "Let me see. You'll want some furnitur. You'll hire that of me, I suppose ? That's the reg'lar thing."

"With great pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"There's a capital room up in the coffee-room flight, that belongs to a Chancery prisoner," said Mr. Roker. "It'll stand you in a pound a-week. I suppose you don't mind that ?"

"Not at all," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Just step there with me," said Roker, taking up his hat with great alacrity ; "the matter's settled in five minutes. Lord ! why didn't you say at first that you was willing to come down handsome ?"

The matter was soon arranged, as the turnkey had fore-

told. The Chancery prisoner had been there long enough to have lost friends, fortune, home, and happiness, and to have acquired the right of having a room to himself. As he laboured, however, under the inconvenience of often wanting a morsel of bread, he eagerly listened to Mr. Pickwick's proposal to rent the apartment, and readily covenanted and agreed to yield him up the sole and undisturbed possession thereof, in consideration of the weekly payment of twenty shillings; from which fund he furthermore contracted to pay out any person or persons that might be chummed upon it.

As they struck the bargain, Mr. Pickwick surveyed him with a painful interest. He was a tall, gaunt, cadaverous man, in an old great-coat and slippers: with sunken cheeks, and a restless, eager eye. His lips were bloodless, and his bones sharp and thin. God help him! the iron teeth of confinement and privation had been slowly filing him down for twenty years.

"And where will you live meanwhile, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, as he laid the amount of the first week's rent, in advance, on the tottering table.

The man gathered up the money with a trembling hand, and replied that he didn't know yet; he must go and see where he could move his bed to.

"I am afraid, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, laying his hand gently and compassionately on his arm; "I am afraid you will have to live in some noisy crowded place. Now, pray, consider this room your own when you want quiet, or when any of your friends come to see you."

"Friends!" interposed the man, in a voice which rattled in his throat. "If I lay dead at the bottom of the deepest mine in the world; tight screwed down and soldered in my coffin; rotting in the dark and filthy ditch that drags its slime along, beneath the foundations of this prison; I could not be more forgotten or unheeded than I am here. I am a dead man; dead to society, without the pity they bestow on those whose souls have passed to judgment. Friends to see *me*! My God! I have sunk, from the prime of life into old age, in this place, and there is not one to raise his hand above my bed when I lie dead upon it, and say, 'It is a blessing he is gone!'"

The excitement, which had cast an unwonted light over the man's face, while he spoke, subsided as he concluded;

and, pressing his withered hands together in a hasty and disordered manner, he shuffled from the room.

"Rides rather rusty," said Mr. Roker, with a smile. "Ah! they're like the elephants. They feel it now and then, and it makes 'em wild!"

Having made this deeply-sympathising remark, Mr. Roker entered upon his arrangements with such expedition, that in a short time the room was furnished with a carpet, six chairs, a table, a sofa bedstead, a tea-kettle, and various small articles, on hire, at the very reasonable rate of seven-and-twenty shillings and sixpence per week.

"Now, is there anything more we can do for you?" inquired Mr. Roker, looking round with great satisfaction, and gaily chinking the first week's hire in his closed fist.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Pickwick, who had been musing deeply for some time. "Are there any people here, who run on errands, and so forth?"

"Outside, do you mean?" inquired Mr. Roker.

"Yes. I mean who are able to go outside. Not prisoners."

"Yes, there is," said Roker. "There's an unfortunate devil, who has got a friend on the poor side, that's glad to do anything of that sort. He's been running odd jobs, and that, for the last two months. Shall I send him?"

"If you please," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "Stay; no. The poor side, you say? I should like to see it. I'll go to him myself."

The poor side of a debtor's prison, is, as its name imports, that in which the most miserable and abject class of debtors are confined. A prisoner having declared upon the poor side, pays neither rent nor chummage. His fees, upon entering and leaving the gaol, are reduced in amount, and he becomes entitled to a share of some small quantities of food: to provide which, a few charitable persons have, from time to time, left trifling legacies in their wills. Most of our readers will remember, that, until within a very few years past, there was a kind of iron cage in the wall of the Fleet Prison, within which was posted some man of hungry looks, who, from time to time, rattled a money-box, and exclaimed in a mournful voice, "Pray, remember the poor debtors; pray, remember the poor debtors." The receipts of this box, when there were any, were divided among the

poor prisoners ; and the men on the poor side relieved each other in this degrading office.

Although this custom has been abolished, and the cage is now boarded up, the miserable and destitute condition of these unhappy persons remains the same. We no longer suffer them to appeal at the prison gates to the charity and compassion of the passers by : but we still leave unblotted in the leaves of our statute book, for the reverence and admiration of succeeding ages, the just and wholesome law which declares that the sturdy felon shall be fed and clothed, and that the penniless debtor shall be left to die of starvation and nakedness. This is no fiction. Not a week passes over our heads, but, in every one of our prisons for debt, some of these men must inevitably expire in the slow agonies of want, if they were not relieved by their fellow-prisoners.

Turning these things in his mind, as he mounted the narrow staircase at the foot of which Roker had left him, Mr. Pickwick gradually worked himself to the boiling-over point ; and so excited was he with his reflections on this subject, that he had burst into the room to which he had been directed, before he had any distinct recollection, either of the place in which he was, or of the object of his visit.

The general aspect of the room recalled him to himself at once ; but he had no sooner cast his eyes on the figure of a man who was brooding over the dusty fire, than, letting his hat fall on the floor, he stood perfectly fixed, and immoveable, with astonishment.

Yes ; in tattered garments, and without a coat ; his common calico shirt, yellow and in rags ; his hair hanging over his face ; his features changed with suffering, and pinched with famine ; there sat Mr. Alfred Jingle : his head resting on his hand, his eyes fixed upon the fire, and his whole appearance denoting misery and dejection !

Near him, leaning listlessly against the wall, stood a strong-built countryman, flicking with a worn-out hunting-whip the top-boot that adorned his right foot : his left being (for he dressed by easy stages) thrust into an old slipper. Horses, dogs, and drink, had brought him there, pell-mell. There was a rusty spur on the solitary boot, which he occasionally jerked into the empty air, at the same time giving the boot a smart blow, and muttering some of the sounds by which a sportsman encourages his horse. He

was riding, in imagination, some desperate steeple-chase at that moment. Poor wretch! He never rode a match on the swiftest animal in his costly stud, with half the speed at which he had torn along the course that ended in the Fleet.

On the opposite side of the room an old man was seated on a small wooden box, with his eyes rivetted on the floor, and his face settled into an expression of the deepest and most hopeless despair. A young girl—his little granddaughter—was hanging about him: endeavouring, with a thousand childish devices, to engage his attention; but the old man neither saw nor heard her. The voice that had been music to him, and the eyes that had been light, fell coldly on his senses. His limbs were shaking with disease, and the palsy had fastened on his mind.

There were two or three other men in the room, congregated in a little knot, and noisily talking among themselves. There was a lean and haggard woman, too—a prisoner's wife—who was watering, with great solicitude, the wretched stump of a dried-up, withered plant, which, it was plain to see, could never send forth a green leaf again;—too true an emblem, perhaps, of the office she had come there to discharge.

Such were the objects which presented themselves to Mr. Pickwick's view, as he looked round him in amazement. The noise of some one stumbling hastily into the room, roused him. Turning his eyes towards the door, they encountered the new comer; and in him, through his rags and dirt, he recognised the familiar features of Mr. Job Trotter.

"Mr. Pickwick!" exclaimed Job aloud.

"Eh?" said Jingle, starting from his seat. "Mr. ——! So it is—queer place—strange thing—serves me right—very." Mr. Jingle thrust his hands into the place where his trousers pockets used to be, and, dropping his chin upon his breast, sank back into his chair.

Mr. Pickwick was affected; the two men looked so very miserable. The sharp involuntary glance Jingle had cast at a small piece of raw loin of mutton, which Job had brought in with him, said more of their reduced state than two hours' explanation could have done. Mr. Pickwick looked mildly at Jingle, and said:

"I should like to speak to you in private. Will you step out for an instant?"

"Certainly," said Jingle, rising hastily. "Can't step far—no danger of over-walking yourself here—Spike park—grounds pretty—romantic, but not extensive—open for public inspection—family always in town—housekeeper desperately careful—very."

"You have forgotten your coat," said Mr. Pickwick, as they walked out to the staircase, and closed the door after them.

"Eh?" said Jingle. "Spout—dear relation—uncle Tom—couldn't help it—must eat, you know. Wants of nature—and all that."

"What do you mean?"

"Gone, my dear sir—last coat—can't help it. Lived on a pair of boots—whole fortnight. Silk umbrella—ivory handle—week—fact—honour—ask Job—knows it."

"Lived for three weeks upon a pair of boots, and a silk umbrella with an ivory handle!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, who had only heard of such things in shipwrecks, or read of them in Constable's Miscellany.

"True," said Jingle, nodding his head. "Pawnbroker's shop—duplicates here—small sums—mere nothing—all rascals."

"Oh," said Mr. Pickwick, much relieved by this explanation; "I understand you. You have pawned your wardrobe."

"Everything—Job's too—all shirts gone—never mind—saves washing. Nothing soon—lie in bed—starve—die—Inquest—little bone-house—poor prisoner—common necessities—hush it up—gentlemen of the jury—warden's tradesmen—keep it snug—natural death—coroner's order—work-house funeral—serve him right—all over—drop the curtain."

Jingle delivered this singular summary of his prospects in life, with his accustomed volubility, and with various twitches of the countenance to counterfeit smiles. Mr. Pickwick easily perceived that his recklessness was assumed, and looking him full, but not unkindly, in the face, saw that his eyes were moist with tears.

"Good fellow," said Jingle, pressing his hand, and turning his head away. "Ungrateful dog—boyish to cry—can't help it—bad fever—weak—ill—hungry. Deserved it all—but suffered much—very." Wholly unable to keep up appearances any longer, and perhaps rendered worse by the effort he had made, the dejected stroller sat down on the stairs, and, covering his face with his hands, sobbed like a child.

"Come, come," said Mr. Pickwick, with considerable emo-



DISCOVERY OF JINGLE IN THE FLEET

tion, "we'll see what can be done, when I know all about the matter. Here, Job; where is that fellow?"

"Here, sir," replied Job, presenting himself on the staircase. We have described him, by-the-bye, as having deeply-sunken eyes, in the best of times. In his present state of want and distress, he looked as if those features had gone out of town altogether.

"Here, sir," cried Job.

"Come here, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, trying to look stern, with four large tears running down his waistcoat. "Take that, sir."

Take what? In the ordinary acceptance of such language, it should have been a blow. As the world runs, it ought to have been a sound, hearty cuff; for Mr. Pickwick had been duped, deceived, and wronged by the destitute outcast who was now wholly in his power. Must we tell the truth? It was something from Mr. Pickwick's waistcoat-pocket, which chinked as it was given into Job's hand, and the giving of which, somehow or other imparted a sparkle to the eye, and a swelling to the heart, of our excellent old friend, as he hurried away.

Sam had returned when Mr. Pickwick reached his own room, and was inspecting the arrangements that had been made for his comfort, with a kind of grim satisfaction which was very pleasant to look upon. Having a decided objection to his master's being there at all, Mr. Weller appeared to consider it a high moral duty not to appear too much pleased with anything that was done, said, suggested, or proposed.

"Well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Pretty comfortable now, eh, Sam?"

"Pretty vell, sir," responded Sam, looking round him in a disparaging manner.

"Have you seen Mr. Tupman and our other friends?"

"Yes, I *have* seen 'em, sir, and they're a comin' to-morrow, and wos wery much surprised to hear they warn't to come to-day," replied Sam.

"You have brought the things I wanted?"

Mr. Weller in reply pointed to various packages which he had arranged, as neatly as he could, in a corner of the room.

"Very well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, after a little hesitation; "listen to what I am going to say, Sam."

"Cert'nly, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller, "fire away, sir."

"I have felt from the first, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, with much solemnity, "that this is not the place to bring a young man to."

"Nor an old 'un neither, sir," observed Mr. Weller.

"You're quite right, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick; "but old men may come here, through their own heedlessness and unsuspicion: and young men may be brought here by the selfishness of those they serve. It is better for those young men, in every point of view, that they should not remain here. Do you understand me, Sam?"

"Vy no, sir, I do not," replied Mr. Weller, doggedly.

"Try, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Vell, sir," rejoined Sam, after a short pause, "I think I see your drift; and if I do see your drift, it's my 'pinion that you're a comin' it a great deal too strong, as the mail-coachman said to the snow-storm, ven it overtook him."

"I see you comprehend me, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "Independently of my wish that you should not be idling about a place like this, for years to come, I feel that for a debtor in the Fleet to be attended by his man-servant is a monstrous absurdity. Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "for a time, you must leave me."

"Oh, for a time, eh, sir?" rejoined Mr. Weller, rather sarcastically.

"Yes, for the time that I remain here," said Mr. Pickwick. "Your wages I shall continue to pay. Any one of my three friends will be happy to take you, were it only out of respect to me. And if I ever do leave this place, Sam," added Mr. Pickwick, with assumed cheerfulness: "if I do, I pledge you my word that you shall return to me instantly."

"Now I'll tell you wot it is, sir," said Mr. Weller, in a grave and solemn voice, "This here sort o' thing won't do at all, so don't let's hear no more about it."

"I am serious, and resolved, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You air, air you, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller, firmly. "Wery good, sir. Then so am I."

Thus speaking, Mr. Weller fixed his hat on his head with great precision, and abruptly left the room.

"Sam!" cried Mr. Pickwick, calling after him, "Sam! Here!"

But the long gallery ceased to re-echo the sound of footsteps. Sam Weller was gone.

CHAPTER XLIII

SHOWING HOW MR. SAMUEL WELLER GOT INTO DIFFICULTIES

IN a lofty room, ill-lighted and worse ventilated, situate in Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, there sit nearly the whole year round, one, two, three, or four gentlemen in wigs, as the case may be, with little writing desks before them, constructed after the fashion of those used by the judges of the land, barring the French polish. There is a box of barristers on their right hand; there is an inclosure of insolvent debtors on their left; and there is an inclined plane of most especially dirty faces in their front. These gentlemen are the Commissioners of the Insolvent Court, and the place in which they sit, is the Insolvent Court itself.

It is, and has been, time out of mind, the remarkable fate of this Court to be, somehow or other, held and understood, by the general consent of all the destitute shabby-genteel people in London, as their common resort, and place of daily refuge. It is always full. The steams of beer and spirits perpetually ascend to the ceiling, and, being condensed by the heat, roll down the walls like rain; there are more old suits of clothes in it at one time, than will be offered for sale in all Houndsditch in a twelvemonth; more unwashed skins and grizzly beards than all the pumps and shaving-shops between Tyburn and Whitechapel could render decent, between sunrise and sunset.

It must not be supposed that any of these people have the least shadow of business in, or the remotest connection with, the place they so indefatigably attend. If they had, it would be no matter of surprise, and the singularity of the thing would cease. Some of them sleep during the greater part of the sitting; others carry small portable dinners

wrapped in pocket-handkerchiefs or sticking out of their worn-out pockets, and munch and listen with equal relish ; but no one among them was ever known to have the slightest personal interest in any case that was ever brought forward. Whatever they do, there they sit from the first moment to the last. When it is heavy rainy weather, they all come in, wet through ; and at such times the vapours of the Court are like those of a fungus-pit.

A casual visitor might suppose this place to be a Temple dedicated to the Genius of Seediness. There is not a messenger or process-server attached to it, who wears a coat that was made for him ; not a tolerably fresh, or wholesome-looking man in the whole establishment, except a little white-headed apple-faced tipstaff, and even he, like an ill-conditioned cherry preserved in brandy, seems to have artificially dried and withered up into a state of preservation to which he can lay no natural claim. The very barristers' wigs are ill-powdered, and their curls lack crispness.

But the attorneys, who sit at a large bare table below the Commissioners, are, after all, the greatest curiosities. The professional establishment of the more opulent of these gentlemen, consists of a blue bag and a boy : generally a youth of the Jewish persuasion. They have no fixed offices, their legal business being transacted in the parlours of public-houses, or the yards of prisons : whither they repair in crowds, and canvass for customers after the manner of omnibus cads. They are of a greasy and mildewed appearance ; and if they can be said to have any vices at all, perhaps drinking and cheating are the most conspicuous among them. Their residences are usually on the outskirts of "the Rules," chiefly lying within a circle of one mile from the obelisk in St. George's Fields. Their looks are not prepossessing, and their manners are peculiar.

Mr. Solomon Pell, one of this learned body, was a fat flabby pale man, in a surtout which looked green one minute and brown the next : with a velvet collar of the same cameleon tints. His forehead was narrow, his face wide, his head large, and his nose all on one side, as if Nature, indignant with the propensities she observed in him in his birth, had given it an angry tweak which it had never recovered. Being short-necked and asthmatic, however, he respired principally through this feature ; so, perhaps, what it wanted in ornament, it made up in usefulness.

"I'm sure to bring him through it," said Mr. Pell.

"Are you though?" replied the person to whom the assurance was pledged.

"Certain sure," replied Pell; "but if he'd gone to any irregular practitioner, mind you, I wouldn't have answered for the consequences."

"Ah!" said the other, with open mouth.

"No, that I wouldn't," said Mr. Pell; and he pursed up his lips, frowned, and shook his head mysteriously.

Now, the place where this discourse occurred, was the public-house just opposite to the Insolvent Court; and the person with whom it was held, was no other than the elder Mr. Weller, who had come there, to comfort and console a friend, whose petition to be discharged under the Act was to be that day heard, and whose attorney he was at that moment consulting.

"And vere is George?" inquired the old gentleman.

Mr. Pell jerked his head in the direction of a back parlour: whither Mr. Weller at once repairing, was immediately greeted in the warmest and most flattering manner by some half-dozen of his professional brethren, in token of their gratification at his arrival. The insolvent gentleman, who had contracted a speculative but imprudent passion for horsing long stages, which had led to his present embarrassments, looked extremely well, and was soothing the excitement of his feelings with shrimps and porter.

The salutation between Mr. Weller and his friends was strictly confined to the freemasonry of the craft; consisting of a jerking round of the right wrist, and a tossing of the little finger into the air at the same time. We once knew two famous coachmen (they are dead now, poor fellows) who were twins, and between whom an unaffected and devoted attachment existed. They passed each other on the Dover road, every day, for twenty-four years, never exchanging any other greeting than this; and yet, when one died, the other pined away, and soon afterwards followed him!

"Vell, George," said Mr. Weller, senior, taking off his upper coat, and seating himself with his accustomed gravity. "How is it? All right behind, and full inside?"

"All right, old feller," replied the embarrassed gentleman.

"Is the grey mare made over to anybody?" inquired Mr. Weller, anxiously.

George nodded in the affirmative.

"Vell, that's all right," said Mr. Weller. "Coach taken care on, also?"

"Con-signed in a safe quarter," replied George, wringing the heads off half-a-dozen shrimps, and swallowing them without any more ado.

"Wery good, wery good," said Mr. Weller. "Always see to the drag ven you go down hill. Is the vay-bill all clear and straight for'erd?"

"The schedule, sir," said Pell, guessing at Mr. Weller's meaning, "the schedule is as plain and satisfactory as pen and ink can make it."

Mr. Weller nodded in a manner which bespoke his inward approval of these arrangements; and then, turning to Mr. Pell, said, pointing to his friend George:

"Ven do you take his cloths off?"

"Why," replied Mr. Pell, "he stands thir'd on the opposed list, and I should think it would be his turn in about half an hour. I told my clerk to come over and tell us when there was a chance."

Mr. Weller surveyed the attorney from head to foot with great admiration, and said emphatically:

"And what'll you take, sir?"

"Why, really," replied Mr. Pell, "you're very——. Upon my word and honour, I'm not in the habit of——. It's so very early in the morning, that, actually, I am almost——. Well, you may bring me three penn'orth of rum, my dear."

The officiating damsel, who had anticipated the order before it was given, set the glass of spirits before Pell, and retired.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Pell, looking round upon the company, "Success to your friend! I don't like to boast, gentlemen; it's not my way; but I can't help saying, that, if your friend hadn't been fortunate enough to fall into hands that—but I won't say what I was going to say. Gentlemen, my service to you." Having emptied the glass in a twinkling, Mr. Pell smacked his lips, and looked complacently round on the assembled coachmen, who evidently regarded him as a species of divinity.

"Let me see," said the legal authority. "What was I a-saying, gentlemen?"

"I think you was remarkin' as you wouldn't have no objection to another o' the same, sir," said Mr. Weller, with grave facetiousness.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Pell. "Not bad, not bad. A professional man, too! At this time of the morning, it would be rather too good a——. Well, I don't know, my dear—you *may* do that again, if you please. Hem!"

This last sound was a solemn and dignified cough, in which Mr. Pell, observing an indecent tendency to mirth in some of his auditors, considered it due to himself to indulge.

"The late Lord Chancellor, gentlemen, was very fond of me," said Mr. Pell.

"And wery creditable in him, too," interposed Mr. Weller.

"Hear, hear," assented Mr. Pell's client. "Why shouldn't he be?"

"Ah! Why, indeed!" said a very red-faced man, who had said nothing yet, and who looked extremely unlikely to say anything more. "Why shouldn't he?"

A murmur of assent ran through the company.

"I remember, gentlemen," said Mr. Pell, "dining with him on one occasion;—there was only us two, but everything as splendid as if twenty people had been expected—the great seal on a dumb-waiter at his right hand, and a man in a bag-wig and suit of armour guarding the mace with a drawn sword and silk stockings—which is perpetually done, gentlemen, night and day; when he said, 'Pell,' he said, 'no false delicacy, Pell. You're a man of talent; you can get anybody through the Insolvent Court, Pell; and your country should be proud of you.' Those were his very words. 'My Lord,' I said, 'you flatter me.'—'Pell,' he said, 'if I do, I'm damned.'"

"Did he say that?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"He did," replied Pell.

"Vell, then," said Mr. Weller, "I say Parliament ought to ha' took it up; and if he'd been a poor man, they *would* ha' done it."

"But, my dear friend," argued Mr. Pell, "it was in confidence."

"In what?" said Mr. Weller.

"In confidence."

"Oh! wery good," replied Mr. Weller, after a little reflection. "If he damned his-self in confidence, o' course that was another thing."

"Of course it was," said Mr. Pell. "The distinction's obvious, you will perceive."

"Alters the case entirely," said Mr. Weller. "Go on, sir."

"No, I will not go on, sir," said Mr. Pell, in a low and serious tone. "You have reminded me, sir, that this conversation was private—private and confidential, gentlemen. Gentlemen, I am a professional man. It may be that I am a good deal looked up to, in my profession—it may be that I am not. Most people know. I say nothing. Observations have already been made, in this room, injurious to the reputation of my noble friend. You will excuse me, gentlemen; I was imprudent. I feel that I have no right to mention this matter without his concurrence. Thank you, sir; thank you." Thus delivering himself, Mr. Pell thrust his hands into his pockets, and, frowning grimly around, rattled three-halfpence with terrible determination.

This virtuous resolution had scarcely been formed, when the boy and the blue bag, who were inseparable companions, rushed violently into the room, and said (at least the boy did, for the blue bag took no part in the announcement) that the case was coming on directly. The intelligence was no sooner received than the whole party hurried across the street, and began to fight their way into Court—a preparatory ceremony, which has been calculated to occupy, in ordinary cases, from twenty-five minutes to thirty.

Mr. Weller, being stout, cast himself at once into the crowd, with the desperate hope of ultimately turning up in some place which would suit him. His success was not quite equal to his expectations: for having neglected to take his hat off, it was knocked over his eyes by some unseen person, upon whose toes he had alighted with considerable force. Apparently, this individual regretted his impetuosity immediately afterwards; for, muttering an indistinct exclamation of surprise, he dragged the old man out into the hall, and, after a violent struggle, released his head and face.

"Samivel!" exclaimed Mr. Weller, when he was thus enabled to behold his rescuer.

Sam nodded.

"You're a dutiful and affectionate little boy, you are, ain't you?" said Mr. Weller, "to come a bonnetin' your father in his old age?"

"How should I know who you was?" responded the son. "Do you s'pose I was to tell you by the weight o' your foot?"

"Vell, that's verry true, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, mollified at once; "but wot are you a doin' on here? Your

gov'nor can't do no good here, Sammy. They won't pass that werdick, they won't pass it, Sammy." And Mr. Weller shook his head, with legal solemnity.

"Wot a perwerse old file it is!" exclaimed Sam, "always a goin' on about werdicks and alleybis, and that. Who said anything about the werdick?"

Mr. Weller made no reply, but once more shook his head most learnedly.

"Leave off rattlin' that 'ere nob o' yourn, if you don't want it to come off the springs altogether," said Sam impatiently, "and behave reasonable. I vent all the way down to the Markis o' Granby, arter you, last night."

"Did you see the Marchioness o' Granby, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller, with a sigh.

"Yes, I did," replied Sam.

"How was the dear creetur a lookin'?"

"Wery queer," said Sam. "I think she's a injurin' herself gradivally vith too much o' that 'ere pine-apple rum, and other strong medicines o' the same natur."

"You don't mean that, Sammy?" said the senior, earnestly.

"I do, indeed," replied the junior.

Mr. Weller seized his son's hand, clasped it, and let it fall. There was an expression on his countenance in doing so—not of dismay or apprehension, but partaking more of the sweet and gentle character of hope. A gleam of resignation, and even of cheerfulness, passed over his face too, as he slowly said, "I ain't quite certain, Sammy; I wouldn't like to say I was altogether positive, in case of any subsektent disappointment, but I rayther think, my boy, I rayther think, that the shepherd's got the liver complaint!"

"Does he look bad?" inquired Sam.

"He's uncommon pale," replied his father, "'cept about the nose, wich is redder than ever. His appetite is wery so-so, but he imbibes wunderful."

Some thoughts of the rum appeared to obtrude themselves on Mr. Weller's mind, as he said this; for he looked gloomy and thoughtful; but he very shortly recovered, as was testified by a perfect alphabet of winks, in which he was only wont to indulge when particularly pleased.

"Vell, now," said Sam, "about my affair. Just open them ears o' yourn, and don't say nothin' till I've done." With this brief preface, Sam related, as succinctly as he

could, the last memorable conversation he had had with Mr. Pickwick.

"Stop there by himself, poor creetur!" exclaimed the elder Mr. Weller, "without nobody to take his part! It can't be done, Samivel, it can't be done."

"O' course it can't," asserted Sam: "I know'd that, afore I came."

"Wy, they'll eat him up alive, Sammy," exclaimed Mr. Weller.

Sam nodded his concurrence in the opinion.

"He goes in rayther raw, Sammy," said Mr. Weller metaphorically, "and he'll come out, done so ex-ceedin' brown, that his most familiar friends won't know him. Roast pigeon's nothin' to it, Sammy."

Again Sam Weller nodded.

"It oughtn't to be, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, gravely.

"It mustn't be," said Sam.

"Cert'nly not," said Mr. Weller.

"Vell now," said Sam, "you've been a prophecyin' away, wery fine, like a red-faced Nixon as the sixpenny books gives picters on."

"Who was he, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Never mind who he was," retorted Sam; "he warn't a coachman; that's enough for you."

"I know'd a ostler o' that name," said Mr. Weller, musing.

"It warn't him," said Sam. "This here gen'l'm'n was a prophet."

"Wot's a prophet?" inquired Mr. Weller, looking sternly on his son.

"Wy, a man as tells what's a goin' to happen," replied Sam.

"I wish I'd know'd him, Sammy," said Mr. Weller. "P'raps he might ha' throw'd a small light on that 'ere liver complaint as we wos a speakin' on, just now. Hows'ever, if he's dead, and ain't left the bisness to nobody, there's an end on it. Go on, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, with a sigh.

"Well," said Sam, "you've been a prophecyin' away, about wot'll happen to the gov'nor if he's left alone. Don't you see any vay o' takin' care on him?"

"No, I don't, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, with a reflective visage.

"No vay at all?" inquired Sam.

"No vay," said Mr. Weller, "unless"—and a gleam of intelligence lighted up his countenance as he sunk his voice to a whisper, and applied his mouth to the ear of his offspring: "unless it is getting him out in a turn-up bedstead, unbeknown to the turnkeys, Sammy, or dressin' him up like a old 'ooman with a green wail."

Sam Weller received both of these suggestions with unexpected contempt, and again propounded his question.

"No," said the old gentleman; "if he von't let you stop there, I see no vay at all. It's no thoroughfare, Sammy, no thoroughfare."

"Well, then, I'll tell you wot it is," said Sam, "I'll trouble you for the loan of five-and-twenty pound."

"Wot good 'ull that do?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Never mind," replied Sam. "P'raps you may ask for it, five minits arterwards; p'raps I may say I von't pay, and cut up rough. You von't think o' arrestin' your own son for the money, and sendin' him off to the Fleet, will you, you unnat'ral wagabone?"

At this reply of Sam's, the father and son exchanged a complete code of telegraphic nods and gestures, after which, the elder Mr. Weller sat himself down on a stone step, and laughed till he was purple.

"Wot a old image it is!" exclaimed Sam, indignant at this loss of time. "What are you a settin' down there for, con-wertin' your face into a street-door knocker, wen there's so much to be done. Where's the money?"

"In the boot, Sammy, in the boot," replied Mr. Weller, composing his features. "Hold my hat, Sammy."

Having divested himself of this incumbrance, Mr. Weller gave his body a sudden wrench to one side, and, by a dexterous twist, contrived to get his right hand into a most capacious pocket, from whence, after a great deal of panting and exertion, he extricated a pocket-book of the large octavo size, fastened by a huge leathern strap. From this ledger he drew forth a couple of whip-lashes, three or four buckles, a little sample-bag of corn, and finally a small roll of very dirty bank-notes: from which he selected the required amount, which he handed over to Sam.

"And now, Sammy," said the old gentleman, when the whip-lashes, and the buckles, and the samples, had been all put back, and the book once more deposited at the bottom of the same pocket, "Now, Sammy, I know a gen'l'm'n here,

as'll do the rest o' the bisness for us, in no time—a limb o' the law, Sammy, as has got brains like the frogs, dispersed all over his body, and reachin' to the wery tips of his fingers; a friend of the Lord Chancellorship's, Sammy, who'd only have to tell him what he wanted, and he'd lock you up for life, if that wos all."

"I say," said Sam, "none o' that."

"None o' wot?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Wy, none o' them unconstitootional ways o' doing it," retorted Sam. "The have-his-carcase, next to the perpetual motion, is vun of the blessedest things as wos ever made. I've read that 'ere in the newspapers, wery of'en."

"Well, wot's that got to do vith it?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Just this here," said Sam, "that I'll patronise the invention, and go in, that vay. No visperin's to the Chancellorship, I don't like the notion. It mayn't be altogether safe, vith reference to gettin' out agin."

Deferring to his son's feeling upon this point, Mr. Weller at once sought the erudite Solomon Pell, and acquainted him with his desire to issue a writ, instantly, for the sum of twenty-five pounds, and costs of process; to be executed without delay upon the body of one Samuel Weller; the charges thereby incurred, to be paid in advance to Solomon Pell.

The attorney was in high glee, for the embarrassed coach-horser was ordered to be discharged forthwith. He highly approved of Sam's attachment to his master; declared that it strongly reminded him of his own feelings of devotion to his friend, the Chancellor; and at once led the elder Mr. Weller down to the Temple, to swear the affidavit of debt, which the boy, with the assistance of the blue bag, had drawn up on the spot.

Meanwhile, Sam, having been formally introduced to the whitewashed gentleman and his friends, as the offspring of Mr. Weller, of the Belle Savage, was treated with marked distinction, and invited to regale himself with them in honour of the occasion; an invitation which he was by no means backward in accepting.

The mirth of gentlemen of this class is of a grave and quiet character, usually; but the present instance was one of peculiar festivity, and they relaxed in proportion. After some rather tumultuous toasting of the Chief Commissioner and Mr. Solomon Pell, who had that day displayed such transcendent

abilities, a mottled-faced gentleman in a blue shawl proposed that somebody should sing a song. The obvious suggestion was, that the mottled-faced gentleman, being anxious for a song, should sing it himself; but this the mottled-faced gentleman sturdily, and somewhat offensively, declined to do. Upon which, as is not unusual in such cases, a rather angry colloquy ensued.

"Gentlemen," said the coach-horser, "rather than disturb the harmony of this delightful occasion, perhaps Mr. Samuel Weller will oblige the company."

"Raly, gentlemen," said Sam, "I'm not wery much in the habit o' singin' without the instrumēt; but anythin' for a quiet life, as the man said wen he took the sitivation at the lighthouse."

With this prelude, Mr. Samuel Weller burst at once into the following wild and beautiful legend, which, under the impression that it is not generally known, we take the liberty of quoting. We would beg to call particular attention to the monosyllable at the end of the second and fourth lines, which not only enables the singer to take breath at those points, but greatly assists the metre.

ROMANCE

I

Bold Turpin vunce, on Hounslow Heath,
His bold mare Bess bestrode—er;
Ven there he see'd the Bishop's coach
A-coming along the road—er.
So he gallops close to the 'orse's legs,
And he claps his head vithin;
And the Bishop says, "Sure as eggs is eggs,
This here's the bold Turpin!"

CHORUS

And the Bishop says, "Sure as eggs is eggs,
This here's the bold Turpin!"

II

Says Turpin, "You shall eat your words,
With a sarse of leaden bul-let;"
So he puts a pistol to his mouth,
And he fires it down his gul-let.
The coachman he not likin' the job,
Set off at a full gal-lop,
But Dick put a couple of balls in his nob,
And perwailed on him to stop.

CHORUS (*sarcastically*)

But Dick put a couple of balls in his nob,
And perwailed on him to stop.

"I maintain that that 'ere song's personal to the cloth," said the mottled-faced gentleman, interrupting it at this point. "I demand the name o' that coachman."

"Nobody know'd," replied Sam. "He hadn't got his card in his pocket."

"I object to the introduction o' politics," said the mottled-faced gentleman. "I submit that, in the present company, that 'ere song's political; and, wot's much the same, that it ain't true. I say that that coachman did *not* run away; but that he died game—game as pheasants; and I won't hear nothin' said to the contrairey."

As the mottled-faced gentleman spoke with great energy and determination: and as the opinions of the company seemed divided on the subject: it threatened to give rise to fresh altercation, when Mr. Weller and Mr. Pell most opportunely arrived.

"All right, Sammy," said Mr. Weller.

"The officer will be here at four o'clock," said Mr. Pell.

"I suppose you won't run away meanwhile, eh? Ha! Ha!"

"P'raps my cruel pa 'ull relent afore then," replied Sam, with a broad grin.

"Not I," said the elder Mr. Weller.

"Do," said Sam.

"Not on no account," replied the inexorable creditor.

"I'll give bills for the amount, at sixpence a month," said Sam.

"I won't take 'em," said Mr. Weller.

"Ha, ha, ha! very good, very good," said Mr. Solomon Pell, who was making out his little bill of costs; "a very amusing incident indeed! Benjamin, copy that." And Mr. Pell smiled again, as he called Mr. Weller's attention to the amount.

"Thank you, thank you," said the professional gentleman, taking up another of the greasy notes as Mr. Weller took it from the pocket-book. "Three ten and one ten is five. Much obliged to you, Mr. Weller. Your son is a most deserving young man, very much so indeed, sir. It's a very pleasant trait in a young man's character, very much so," added Mr. Pell, smiling smoothly round, as he buttoned up the money.

"Wot a game it is!" said the elder Mr. Weller, with a chuckle. "A reg'lar prodigy son!"

"Prodigal, prodigal son, sir," suggested Mr. Pell, mildly.

"Never mind, sir," said Mr. Weller, with dignity. "I know wot's o'clock, sir. Wen I don't, I'll ask you, sir."

By the time the officer arrived, Sam had made himself so extremely popular, that the congregated gentlemen determined to see him to prison in a body. So, off they set; the plaintiff and defendant walking arm-in-arm; the officer in front; and eight stout coachmen bringing up the rear. At Serjeant's Inn Coffee-house the whole party halted to refresh, and, the legal arrangements being completed, the procession moved on again.

Some little commotion was occasioned in Fleet Street, by the pleasantry of the eight gentlemen in the flank, who persevered in walking four abreast; it was also found necessary to leave the mottled-faced gentleman behind, to fight a ticket-porter, it being arranged that his friends should call for him as they came back. Nothing but these little incidents occurred on the way. When they reached the gate of the Fleet, the cavalcade, taking the time from the plaintiff, gave three tremendous cheers for the defendant, and, after having shaken hands all round, left him.

Sam, having been formally delivered into the warden's custody, to the intense astonishment of Roker, and to the evident emotion of even the phlegmatic Neddy, passed at once into the prison, walked straight to his master's room, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam appeared, pulled off his hat, and smiled.

"Ah, Sam, my good lad!" said Mr. Pickwick, evidently delighted to see his humble friend again; "I had no intention of hurting your feelings yesterday, my faithful fellow, by what I said. Put down your hat, Sam, and let me explain my meaning, a little more at length."

"Won't presently do, sir?" inquired Sam.

"Certainly," said Mr. Pickwick; "but why not now?"

"I'd rayther not now, sir," rejoined Sam.

"Why?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"'Cause—" said Sam, hesitating.

"Because of what?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, alarmed at his follower's manner. "Speak out, Sam."

"'Cause," rejoined Sam; "'cause I've got a little bisness as I want to do."

"What business?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, surprised at Sam's confused manner.

"Nothin' partickler, sir," replied Sam.

"Oh, if it's nothing particular," said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile, "you can speak with me first."

"I think I'd better see arter it at once," said Sam, still hesitating.

Mr. Pickwick looked amazed, but said nothing.

"The fact is," said Sam, stopping short.

"Well!" said Mr. Pickwick. "Speak out, Sam."

"Why, the fact is," said Sam, with a desperate effort. "P'raps I'd better see arter my bed afore I do anythin' else."

"*Your bed!*" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, in astonishment.

"Yes, my bed, sir," replied Sam. "I'm a pris'ner. I was arrested, this here wery arternoon, for debt."

"You arrested for debt!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, sinking into a chair.

"Yes, for debt, sir," replied Sam. "And the man as puts me in, 'ull never let me out, till you go yourself."

"Bless my heart and soul!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick. "What do you mean?"

"Wot I say, sir," rejoined Sam. "If it's forty year to come, I shall be a pris'ner, and I'm wery glad on it, and if it had been Newgate, it would ha' been just the same. Now the murder's out, and, damme, there's an end on it!"

With these words, which he repeated with great emphasis and violence, Sam Weller dashed his hat upon the ground, in a most unusual state of excitement; and then, folding his arms, looked firmly and fixedly in his master's face.

CHAPTER XLIV

TREATS OF DIVERS LITTLE MATTERS WHICH OCCURRED
IN THE FLEET, AND OF MR. WINKLE'S MYSTERIOUS
BEHAVIOUR; AND SHOWS HOW THE POOR CHANCERY
PRISONER OBTAINED HIS RELEASE AT LAST

MR. PICKWICK felt a great deal too much touched by the warmth of Sam's attachment, to be able to exhibit any manifestation of anger or displeasure at the precipitate course he had adopted, in voluntarily consigning himself to a debtors' prison, for an indefinite period. The only point on which he persevered in demanding any explanation, was, the name of Sam's detaining creditor; but this Mr. Weller as perseveringly withheld.

"It ain't o' no use, sir," said Sam, again and again. "He's a malicious, bad-disposed, vorldly-minded, spiteful, vindictive creetur, with a hard heart as there ain't no soft'nin'. As the wirtuous clergyman remarked of the old gen'l'm'n with the dropsy, ven he said, that upon the whole he thought he'd rayther leave his property to his vife than build a chapel vith it."

"But consider, Sam," Mr. Pickwick remonstrated, "the sum is so small that it can very easily be paid; and having made up my mind that you shall stop with me, you should recollect how much more useful you would be, if you could go outside the walls."

"Wery much obliged to you, sir," replied Mr. Weller gravely; "but I'd rayther not."

"Rather not do what, Sam?"

"Wy, I'd rayther not let myself down to ask a favour o' this here unremorseful enemy."

"But it is no favour asking him to take his money, Sam," reasoned Mr. Pickwick.

"Beg your pardon, sir," rejoined Sam; "but it 'ud be a verry great favour to pay it, and he don't dese've none; that's where it is, sir."

Here Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his nose with an air of some vexation, Mr. Weller thought it prudent to change the theme of the discourse.

"I takes my determination on principle, sir," remarked Sam, "and you takes yours on the same ground; wich puts me in mind o' the man as killed his-self on principle, wich o' course you've heerd on, sir." Mr. Weller paused when he arrived at this point, and cast a comical look at his master out of the corners of his eyes.

"There is no 'of course' in the case, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, gradually breaking into a smile, in spite of the uneasiness which Sam's obstinacy had given him. "The fame of the gentleman in question, never reached my ears."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Weller. "You astonish me, sir; he wos a clerk in a gov'ment office, sir."

"Was he?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, he wos, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller; "and a verry pleasant gen'l'm'n too—one o' the precise and tidy sort, as puts their feet in little India-rubber fire-buckets wen it's wet weather, and never has no other bosom friends but hare-skins; he saved up his money on principle, wore a clean shirt ev'ry day on principle; never spoke to none of his relations on principle, 'fear they shou'd want to borrow money of him; and wos altogether, in fact, an uncommon agreeable character. He had his hair cut on principle vunce a fortnight, and contracted for his clothes on the economic principle—three suits a year, and send back the old uns. Being a verry reg'lar gen'l'm'n, he din'd ev'ry day at the same place, where it wos one and nine to cut off the joint, and a verry good one and nine's worth he used to cut, as the landlord often said, with the tears a tricklin' down his face: let alone the way he used to poke the fire in the vinter time, which wos a dead loss o' four-pence ha'penny a day: to say nothin' at all o' the aggrawation o' seein' him do it. So uncommon grand with it too! 'Post arter the next gen'l'm'n, he sings out ev'ry day ven he comes in. 'See arter the Times, Thomas; let me look at the Mornin' Herald, wen it's out o' hand; don't forget to bespeak the Chronicle; and just bring the "Tizer, vill you:' and then he'd set vith his eyes fixed on the clock, and rush out, just a quarter of a minit afore the time,

to waylay the boy as wos a comin' in with the evenin' paper, wich he'd read with sich intense interest and persewerance as worked the other customers up to the wery confines o' desperation and insanity, 'specially one i-rascible old gen'l'm'n as the vaiter wos always obliged to keep a sharp eye on, at sich times, fear he should be tempted to commit some rash act with the carving knife. Vell, sir, here he'd stop, occupyin' the best place for three hours, and never takin' nothin' arter his dinner, but sleep, and then he'd go away to a coffee-house a few streets off, and have a small pot o' coffee and four crumpets, arter wich he'd walk home to Kensington and go to bed. One night he wos took very ill; sends for a doctor; doctor comes in a green fly, with a kind o' Robinson Crusoe set o' steps, as he could let down wen he got out, and pull up arter him wen he got in, to perwent the necessity o' the coachman's gettin' down, and thereby undeceivin' the public by lettin' 'em see that it wos only a livery coat as he'd got on, and not the trousers to match. 'Wot's the matter?' says the doctor. 'Wery ill,' says the patient. 'Wot have you been a eatin' on?' says the doctor. 'Roast weal,' says the patient. 'Wot's the last thing you dewoured?' says the doctor. 'Crumpets,' says the patient. 'That's it!' says the doctor. 'I'll send you a box of pills directly, and don't you never take no more of 'em,' he says. 'No more o' wot?' says the patient—'Pills?' 'No; crumpets,' says the doctor. 'Wy?' says the patient, starting up in bed; 'I've eat four crumpets, ev'ry night for fifteen year, on principle.' 'Well, then, you'd better leave 'em off, on principle,' says the doctor. 'Crumpets is wholesome, sir,' says the patient. 'Crumpets is *not* wholesome, sir,' says the doctor, wery fierce. 'But they're so cheap,' says the patient, comin' down a little, 'and so wery fillin' at the price.' 'They'd be dear to you, at any price; dear if you wos paid to eat 'em,' says the doctor. 'Four crumpets a night,' he says, 'vill do your business in six months!' The patient looks him full in the face, and turns it over in his mind for a long time, and at last he says, 'Are you sure o' that 'ere, sir?' 'I'll stake my professional reputation on it,' says the doctor. 'How many crumpets, at a sittin', do you think 'ud kill me off at once?' says the patient. 'I don't know,' says the doctor. 'Do you think half a crown's wurth 'ud do it?' says the patient. 'I think it might,' says the doctor. 'Three shillins' wurth 'ud be sure to do it, I s'pose?' says the patient;

‘Certainly,’ says the doctor. ‘Wery good,’ says the patient ; ‘good night.’ Next mornin’ he gets up, has a fire lit, orders in three shillins’ worth o’ crumpets, toasts ‘em all, eats ‘em all, and blows his brains out.”

“What did he do that for?” inquired Mr. Pickwick abruptly; for he was considerably startled by this tragical termination of the narrative.

“Wot did he do it for, sir?” reiterated Sam. “Wy in support of his great principle that crumpets wos wholesome, and to show that he wouldn’t be put out of his way for nobody!”

With such like shiftings and changings of the discourse, did Mr. Weller meet his master’s questioning on the night of his taking up his residence in the Fleet. Finding all gentle remonstrance useless, Mr. Pickwick at length yielded a reluctant consent to his taking lodgings by the week, of a bald-headed cobbler, who rented a small slip-room in one of the upper galleries. To this humble apartment Mr. Weller moved a mattress and bedding, which he hired of Mr. Roker; and, by the time he lay down upon it at night, was as much at home as if he had been bred in the prison, and his whole family had vegetated therein for three generations.

“Do you always smoke arter you goes to bed, old cock?” inquired Mr. Weller of his landlord, when they had both retired for the night.

“Yes, I does, young bantam,” replied the cobbler.

“Will you allow me to in-quire wy you make up your bed under that ‘ere deal table?” said Sam.

“‘Cause I was always used to a four-poster afore I came here, and I find the legs of the table answer just as well,” replied the cobbler.

“You’re a character, sir,” said Sam.

“I haven’t got anything of the kind belonging to me,” rejoined the cobbler, shaking his head; “and if you want to meet with a good one, I’m afraid you’ll find some difficulty in suiting yourself at this register office.”

The above short dialogue took place as Mr. Weller lay extended on his mattress at one end of the room, and the cobbler on his, at the other; the apartment being illumined by the light of a rush candle, and the cobbler’s pipe, which was glowing below the table, like a red-hot coal. The conversation, brief as it was, predisposed Mr. Weller strongly in his landlord’s favour; and raising himself on his elbow

he took a more lengthened survey of his appearance than he had yet had either time or inclination to make.

He was a sallow man—all cobblers are; and had a strong bristly beard—all cobblers have. His face was a queer, good-tempered, crooked-featured piece of workmanship, ornamented with a couple of eyes that must have worn a very joyous expression at one time, for they sparkled yet. The man was sixty, by years, and Heaven knows how old by imprisonment, so that his having any look approaching to mirth or contentment was singular enough. He was a little man, and, being half doubled up as he lay in bed, looked about as long as he ought to have been without his legs. He had a great red pipe in his mouth, and was smoking, and staring at the rush-light, in a state of enviable placidity.

"Have you been here long?" inquired Sam, breaking the silence which had lasted for some time.

"Twelve year," replied the cobbler, biting the end of his pipe as he spoke.

"Contempt?" inquired Sam.

The cobbler nodded.

"Well, then," said Sam, with some sternness, "wot do you persevere in bein' obstinit for, vastin' your precious life away in this here magnified pound? Wy don't you give in, and tell the Chancellorship that you're verry sorry for makin' his court contemptible, and you won't do so no more?"

The cobbler put his pipe in the corner of his mouth, while he smiled, and then brought it back to its old place again; but said nothing.

"Wy don't you?" said Sam, urging his question strenuously.

"Ah," said the cobbler, "you don't quite understand these matters. What do you suppose ruined me, now?"

"Wy," said Sam, trimming the rush-light, "I s'pose the beginnin' wos, that you got into debt, eh?"

"Never owed a farden," said the cobbler; "try again."

"Well, perhaps," said Sam, "you bought houses, wich is delicate English for goin' mad: or took to buildin', wich is a medical term for bein' incurable."

The cobbler shook his head and said, "Try again."

"You didn't go to law, I hope?" said Sam, suspiciously.

"Never in my life," replied the cobbler. "The fact is, I was ruined by having money left me."

"Come, come," said Sam, "that von't do. I wish some

rich enemy 'ud try to vork *my* destruction in that 'ere vay. I'd let him."

"Oh, I dare say you don't believe it," said the cobbler, quietly smoking his pipe. "I wouldn't if I was you; but it's true for all that."

"How was it?" inquired Sam, half induced to believe the fact already, by the look the cobbler gave him.

"Just this," replied the cobbler; "an old gentleman that I worked for, down in the country, and a humble relation of whose I married—she's dead, God bless her, and thank Him for it!—was seized with a fit and went off."

"Where?" inquired Sam, who was growing sleepy after the numerous events of the day.

"How should I know where he went?" said the cobbler, speaking through his nose in an intense enjoyment of his pipe. "He went off dead."

"Oh, that indeed," said Sam. "Well?"

"Well," said the cobbler, "he left five thousand pound behind him."

"And verry gen-teel in him so to do," said Sam.

"One of which," continued the cobbler, "he left to me, 'cause I'd married his relation, you see."

"Wery good," murmured Sam.

"And being surrounded by a great number of nieces and nevys, as was always a quarrelling and fighting among themselves for the property, he makes me his executor, and leaves the rest to me: in trust, to divide it among 'em as the will provided."

"Wot do you mean by leavin' it on trust?" inquired Sam, waking up a little. "If it ain't ready money, where's the use on it?"

"It's a law term, that's all," said the cobbler.

"I don't think that," said Sam, shaking his head. "There's wery little trust at that shop. Hows'ever, go on."

"Well," said the cobbler: "when I was going to take out a probate of the will, the nieces and nevys, who was desperately disappointed at not getting all the money, enters a caveat against it."

"What's that?" inquired Sam.

"A legal instrument, which is as much as to say, it's no go," replied the cobbler.

"I see," said Sam, "a sort of brother-in-law o' the have-his-carcase. Well."

"But," continued the cobbler, "finding that they couldn't agree among themselves, and consequently couldn't get up a case against the will, they withdrew the caveat, and I paid all the legacies. I'd hardly done it, when one nevy brings an action to set the will aside. The case comes on, some months afterwards, afore a deaf old gentleman, in a back room somewhere down by Paul's Churchyard; and arter four counsels had taken a day a-piece to bother him regularly, he takes a week or two to consider, and read the evidence in six vollums, and then gives his judgment 'hat how the testator was not quite right in his head, and I must pay all the money back again, and all the costs. I appealed; the case come on before three or four very sleepy gentlemen, who had heard it all before in the other court, where they're lawyers without work; the only difference being, that, there, they're called doctors, and in the other place delegates, if you understand that; and they very dutifully confirmed the decision of the old gentleman below. After that, we went into Chancery, where we are still, and where I shall always be. My lawyers have had all my thousand pound long ago; and what between the estate, as they call it, and the costs, I'm here for ten thousand, and shall stop here, till I die, mending shoes. Some gentlemen have talked of bringing it afore parliament, and I dare say would have done it, only they hadn't time to come to me, and I hadn't power to go to them, and they got tired of my long letters, and dropped the business. And this is God's truth, without one word of suppression or exaggeration, as fifty people, both in this place and out of it, very well know."

The cobbler paused to ascertain what effect his story had produced on Sam; but finding that he had dropped asleep, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, sighed, put it down, drew the bedclothes over his head, and went to sleep too.

Mr. Pickwick was sitting at breakfast, alone, next morning (Sam being busily engaged in the cobbler's room, polishing his master's shoes and brushing the black gaiters) when there came a knock at the door, which, before Mr. Pickwick could cry "Come in!" was followed by the appearance of a head of hair and a cotton-velvet cap, both of which articles of dress he had no difficulty in recognising as the personal property of Mr. Smangle.

"How are you?" said that worthy, accompanying the inquiry with a score or two of nods; "I say—do you expect

anybody this morning? Three men—devilish gentlemanly fellows—have been asking after you down-stairs, and knocking at every door on the Hall flight; for which they've been most infernally blown up by the collegians that had the trouble of opening 'em."

"Dear me! How very foolish of them," said Mr. Pickwick, rising. "Yes; I have no doubt they are some friends whom I rather expected to see, yesterday."

"Friends of yours!" exclaimed Smangle, seizing Mr. Pickwick by the hand. "Say no more. Curse me, they're friends of mine from this minute, and friends of Mivins's too. Infernal pleasant, gentlemanly dog, Mivins, isn't he?" said Smangle, with great feeling.

"I know so little of the gentleman," said Mr. Pickwick, hesitating, "that I——"

"I know you do," interposed Smangle, clasping Mr. Pickwick by the shoulder. "You shall know him better. You'll be delighted with him. That man, sir," said Smangle, with a solemn countenance, "has comic powers that would do honour to Drury Lane Theatre."

"Has he indeed?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, by Jove he has!" replied Smangle. "Hear him come the four cats in the wheelbarrow—four distinct cats, sir, I pledge you my honour. Now you know that's infernal clever! Damme, you can't help liking a man, when you see these traits about him. He's only one fault—that little failing I mentioned to you, you know."

As Mr. Smangle shook his head in a confidential and sympathising manner at this juncture, Mr. Pickwick felt that he was expected to say something, so he said "Ah!" and looked restlessly at the door.

"Ah!" echoed Mr. Smangle, with a long-drawn sigh. "He's delightful company, that man is, sir. I don't know better company anywhere; but he has that one drawback. If the ghost of his grandfather, sir, was to rise before him this minute, he'd ask him for the loan of his acceptance on an eighteenpenny stamp."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," added Mr. Smangle; "and if he'd the power of raising him again, he would, in two months and three days from this time, to renew the bill!"

"Those are very remarkable traits," said Mr. Pickwick; "but I'm afraid that while we are talking here, my

friends may be in a state of great perplexity at not finding me."

"I'll show 'em the way," said Smangle, making for the door. "Good day. I won't disturb you while they're here, you know. By-the-bye——"

As Smangle pronounced the last three words, he stopped suddenly, re-closed the door which he had opened, and, walking softly back to Mr. Pickwick, stepped close up to him on tip-toe, and said in a very soft whisper :

"You couldn't make it convenient to lend me half-a-crown till the latter end of next week. could you?"

Mr. Pickwick could scarcely forbear smiling, but managing to preserve his gravity, he drew forth the coin, and placed it in Mr. Smangle's palm; upon which, that gentleman, with many nods and winks, implying profound mystery, disappeared in quest of the three strangers, with whom he presently returned; and having coughed thrice, and nodded as many times, as an assurance to Mr. Pickwick that he would not forget to pay, he shook hands all round, in an engaging manner, and at length took himself off.

"My dear friends," said Mr. Pickwick, shaking hands alternately with Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, who were the three visitors in question, "I am delighted to see you."

The triumvirate were much affected. Mr. Tupman shook his head deplorably; Mr. Snodgrass drew forth his handkerchief, with undisguised emotion; and Mr. Winkle retired to the window and sniffed aloud.

"Mornin', gen'l'm'n," said Sam, entering at the moment with the shoes and gaiters. "Avay with melincolly, as the little boy said ven his school-missis died. Velcome to the College, gen'l'm'n."

"This foolish fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, tapping Sam on the head as he knelt down to button up his master's gaiters: "This foolish fellow has got himself arrested, in order to be near me."

"What!" exclaimed the three friends.

"Yes, gen'l'm'n," said Sam, "I'm a—stand steady, sir, if you please—I'm a pris'ner, gen'l'm'n. Con-fined, as the lady said."

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Mr. Winkle, with unaccountable vehemence.

"Hallo, sir!" responded Sam, looking up. "Wot's the matter, sir?"

"I had hoped, Sam, that——nothing, nothing," said Mr. Winkle, precipitately.

There was something so very abrupt and unsettled in Mr. Winkle's manner, that Mr. Pickwick involuntarily looked at his two friends for an explanation.

"We don't know," said Mr. Tupman, answering this mute appeal aloud. "He has been much excited for two days past, and his whole demeanour very unlike what it usually is. We feared there must be something the matter, but he resolutely denies it."

"No, no," said Mr. Winkle, colouring beneath Mr. Pickwick's gaze; "there is really nothing. I assure you there is nothing, my dear sir. It will be necessary for me to leave town, for a short time, on private business, and I had hoped to have prevailed upon you to allow Sam to accompany me."

Mr. Pickwick looked more astonished than before.

"I think," faltered Mr. Winkle, "that Sam would have had no objection to do so; but, of course, his being a prisoner here, renders it impossible. So I must go alone."

As Mr. Winkle said these words, Mr. Pickwick felt, with some astonishment, that Sam's fingers were trembling at the gaiters, as if he were rather surprised or startled. Sam looked up at Mr. Winkle, too, when he had finished speaking; and though the glance they exchanged was instantaneous, they seemed to understand each other.

"Do you know anything of this, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick, sharply.

"No, I don't, sir," replied Mr. Weller, beginning to button with extraordinary assiduity.

"Are you sure, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Wy, sir," responded Mr. Weller; "I'm sure so far, that I've never heerd anythin' on the subject afore this moment. If I makes any guess about it," added Sam, looking at Mr. Winkle, "I haven't got any right to say wot it is, 'fear it should be a wrong 'un."

"I have no right to make any further inquiry into the private affairs of a friend, however intimate a friend," said Mr. Pickwick, after a short silence; "at present let me merely say, that I do not understand this at all. There. We have had quite enough of the subject."

Thus expressing himself, Mr. Pickwick led the conversation to different topics, and Mr. Winkle gradually appeared more at ease, though still very far from being completely

so. They had all so much to converse about, that the morning very quickly passed away; and when, at three o'clock, Mr. Weller produced upon the little dining table, a roast leg of mutton and an enormous meat pie, with sundry dishes of vegetables, and pots of porter, which stood upon the chairs or the sofa-bedstead, or where they could, everybody felt disposed to do justice to the meal, notwithstanding that the meat had been purchased, and dressed, and the pie made, and baked, at the prison cookery hard by.

To these succeeded a bottle or two of very good wine, for which a messenger was despatched by Mr. Pickwick to the Horn Coffeehouse, in Doctors' Commons. The bottle or two, indeed, might be more properly described as a bottle or six, for by the time it was drunk, and tea over, the bell began to ring for strangers to withdraw.

But, if Mr. Winkle's behaviour had been unaccountable in the morning, it became perfectly unearthly and solemn when, under the influence of his feelings, and his share of the bottle or six, he prepared to take leave of his friend. He lingered behind, until Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass had disappeared, and then fervently clenched Mr. Pickwick's hand, with an expression of face in which deep and mighty resolve was fearfully blended with the very concentrated essence of gloom.

"Good night, my dear sir!" said Mr. Winkle between his set teeth.

"Bless you, my dear fellow!" replied the warm-hearted Mr. Pickwick, as he returned the pressure of his young friend's hand.

"Now then!" cried Mr. Tupman from the gallery.

"Yes, yes, directly," replied Mr. Winkle. "Good night!"

"Good night," said Mr. Pickwick.

There was another good night, and another, and half-a-dozen more after that, and still Mr. Winkle had fast hold of his friend's hand, and was looking into his face with the same strange expression.

"Is anything the matter?" said Mr. Pickwick at last, when his arm was quite sore with shaking.

"Nothing," said Mr. Winkle.

"Well then, good night," said Mr. Pickwick, attempting to disengage his hand.

"My friend, my benefactor, my honoured companion," murmured Mr. Winkle, catching at his wrist. "Do not

judge me harshly ; do not, when you hear that, driven to extremity by hopeless obstacles, I—— ”

“ Now then,” said Mr. Tupman, re-appearing at the door. “ Are you coming, or are we to be locked in ? ”

“ Yes, yes, I am ready,” replied Mr. Winkle. And with a violent effort he tore himself away.

As Mr. Pickwick was gazing down the passage after them in silent astonishment, Sam Weller appeared at the stair-head, and whispered for one moment in Mr. Winkle’s ear.

“ Oh certainly, depend upon me,” said that gentleman aloud.

“ Thankee, sir. You won’t forget, sir ? ” said Sam.

“ Of course not,” replied Mr. Winkle.

“ Wish you luck, sir,” said Sam, touching his hat. “ I should very much like to ha’ joined you, sir ; but the gov’ner o’ course is pairamount.”

“ It is very much to your credit that you remain here,” said Mr. Winkle. With these words they disappeared down the stairs.

“ Very extraordinary,” said Mr. Pickwick, going back into his room, and seating himself at the table in a musing attitude. “ What *can* that young man be going to do ? ”

He had sat ruminating about the matter for some time, when the voice of Roker, the turnkey, demanded whether he might come in.

“ By all means,” said Mr. Pickwick.

“ I’ve brought you a softer pillow, sir,” said Roker, “ instead of the temporary one you had last night.”

“ Thank you,” said Mr. Pickwick. “ Will you take a glass of wine ? ”

“ You’re wery good, sir,” replied Mr. Roker, accepting the proffered glass. “ Yours, sir.”

“ Thank you,” said Mr. Pickwick.

“ I’m sorry to say that your landlord’s wery bad to-night, sir,” said Roker, setting down the glass, and inspecting the lining of his hat preparatory to putting it on again.

“ What ! The Chancery prisoner ! ” exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

“ He won’t be a Chancery prisoner wery long, sir,” replied Roker, turning his hat round, so as to get the maker’s name right side upwards, as he looked into it.

“ You make my blood run cold,” said Mr. Pickwick. “ What do you mean ? ”

"He's been consumptive for a long time past," said Mr. Roker, "and he's taken wery bad in the breath to-night. The doctor said, six months ago, that nothing but change of air could save him."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick; "has this man been slowly murdered by the law for six months?"

"I don't know about that," replied Roker, weighing the hat by the brims in both hands. "I suppose he'd have been took the same, wherever he was. He went into the infirmary, this morning; the doctor says his strength is to be kept up as much as possible; and the warden's sent him wine and broth and that, from his own house. It's not the warden's fault, you know, sir."

"Of course not," replied Mr. Pickwick hastily.

"I'm afraid, however," said Roker, shaking his head, "that it's all up with him. I offered Neddy two six penn'orths to one upon it just now, but he wouldn't take it, and quite right. Thankee, sir. Good night, sir."

"Stay," said Mr. Pickwick earnestly. "Where is this infirmary?"

"Just over where you slept, sir," replied Roker. "I'll show you, if you like to come." Mr. Pickwick snatched up his hat without speaking, and followed at once.

The turnkey led the way in silence; and gently raising the latch of the room-door, motioned Mr. Pickwick to enter. It was a large, bare, desolate room, with a number of stump bedsteads made of iron: on one of which lay stretched, the shadow of a man: wan, pale, and ghastly. His breathing was hard and thick, and he moaned painfully as it came and went. At the bedside sat a short old man in a cobbler's apron, who, by the aid of a pair of horn spectacles, was reading from the Bible aloud. It was the fortunate legatee.

The sick man laid his hand upon his attendant's arm, and motioned him to stop. He closed the book, and laid it on the bed.

"Open the window," said the sick man.

He did so. The noise of carriages and carts, the rattle of wheels, the cries of men and boys, all the busy sounds of a mighty multitude instinct with life and occupation, blended into one deep murmur, floated into the room. Above the hoarse loud hum, arose from time to time a boisterous laugh; or a scrap of some jingling song, shouted forth by one of the giddy crowd, would strike upon the ear for an

instant, and then be lost amidst the roar of voices and the tramp of footsteps; the breaking of the billows of the restless sea of life that rolled heavily on, without. Melancholy sounds to a quiet listener at any time; how melancholy to the watcher by the bed of death!

"There is no air here," said the sick man faintly. "The place pollutes it. It was fresh round about, when I walked there, years ago; but it grows hot and heavy in passing these walls. I cannot breathe it."

"We have breathed it together, for a long time," said the old man. "Come, come."

There was a short silence, during which the two spectators approached the bed. The sick man drew a hand of his old fellow-prisoner towards him, and pressing it affectionately between both his own, retained it in his grasp.

"I hope," he gasped after a while: so faintly that they bent their ears close over the bed to catch the half-formed sounds his pale lips gave vent to: "I hope my merciful Judge will bear in mind my heavy punishment on earth. Twenty years, my friend, twenty years in this hideous grave! My heart broke when my child died, and I could not even kiss him in his little coffin. My loneliness since then, in all this noise and riot, has been very dreadful. May God forgive me! He has seen my solitary, lingering death."

He folded his hands, and murmuring something more they could not hear, fell into a sleep—only a sleep at first, for they saw him smile.

They whispered together for a little time, and the turnkey, stooping over the pillow, drew hastily back. "He has got his discharge, by G—!" said the man.

He had. But he had grown so like death in life, that they knew not when he died.

CHAPTER XLV

MR. PICKWICK MAKES A TOUR OF THE DIMINUTIVE
WORLD HE INHABITS, AND RESOLVES TO MIX
WITH IT, IN FUTURE, AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE

A FEW mornings after his incarceration, Mr. Samuel Weller was accosted by Mr. Pickwick.

"Sam," said that gentleman

"Sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I am going for a walk round the prison, and I wish you to attend me. I see a prisoner we know coming this way. Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

"Wich, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller; "the gen'l'm'n with the head o' hair, or the interestin' captive in the stockin's?"

"Neither," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "He is an older friend of yours, Sam."

"O' mine, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Weller.

"You recollect the gentleman very well, I dare say, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, "or else you are more unmindful of your old acquaintances than I think you are. Hush! not a word, Sam; not a syllable. Here he is."

As Mr. Pickwick spoke, Jingle walked up. He looked less miserable than before, being clad in a half-worn suit of clothes, which, with Mr. Pickwick's assistance, had been released from the pawnbroker's. He wore clean linen too, and had had his hair cut. He was very pale and thin, however; and as he crept slowly up, leaning on a stick, it was easy to see that he had suffered severely from illness and want, and was still very weak. He took off his hat as Mr. Pickwick saluted him, and seemed much humbled and abashed at sight of Sam Weller.

Following close at his heels, came Mr. Job Trotter, in the catalogue of whose vices, want of faith and attachment to his companion could at all events find no place. He was still ragged and squalid, but his face was not quite so hollow

as on his first meeting with Mr. Pickwick, a few days before. As he took off his hat to our benevolent old friend, he murmured some broken expressions of gratitude, and muttered something about having been saved from starving.

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick, impatiently interrupting him, "you can follow with Sam. I want to speak to you, Mr. Jingle. Can you walk without his arm?"

"Certainly, sir—all ready—not too fast—legs shaky—head queer—round and round—earthquaky sort of feeling—very."

"Here, give me your arm," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No, no," replied Jingle; "won't indeed—rather not."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Pickwick, "lean upon me. I desire, sir."

Seeing that he was confused and agitated, and uncertain what to do, Mr. Pickwick cut the matter short by drawing the invalided stroller's arm through his, and leading him away, without saying another word about it.

During the whole of this time, the countenance of Mr. Samuel Weller had exhibited an expression of the most overwhelming and absorbing astonishment that the imagination can portray. After looking from Job to Jingle, and from Jingle to Job in profound silence, he softly ejaculated the words, "*Well, I am damn'd!*" Which he repeated at least a score of times: after which exertion, he appeared wholly bereft of speech, and again cast his eyes, first upon the one and then upon the other, in mute perplexity and bewilderment.

"Now, Sam!" said Mr. Pickwick, looking back.

"I'm a comin', sir," replied Mr. Weller, mechanically following his master; and still he lifted not his eyes from Mr. Job Trotter, who walked at his side, in silence.

Job kept his eyes fixed on the ground for some time. Sam, with his glued to Job's countenance, ran up against the people who were walking about, and fell over little children, and stumbled against steps and railings, without appearing at all sensible of it, until Job, looking stealthily up, said:

"How do you do, Mr. Weller?"

"It is him!" exclaimed Sam: and having established Job's identity beyond all doubt, he smote his leg, and vented his feelings in a long shrill whistle.

"Things has altered with me, sir," said Job.

"I should think they had," exclaimed Mr. Weller, survey-

ing his companion's rags with undisguised wonder. "This is rayther a change for the worse, Mr. Trotter, as the gen'l'm'n said, wen he got two doubtful shillin's and six-penn'orth o' pocket pieces for a good half-crown."

"It is, indeed," replied Job, shaking his head. "There is no deception now, Mr. Weller. Tears," said Job, with a look of momentary slyness, "tears are not the only proofs of distress, nor the best ones."

"No, they ain't," replied Sam, expressively.

"They may be put on, Mr. Weller," said Job.

"I know they may," said Sam; "some people, indeed, has 'em always ready laid on and can pull out the plug wenever they likes."

"Yes," replied Job: "but *these* sort of things are not so easily counterfeited, Mr. Weller, and it is a more painful process to get them up." As he spoke, he pointed to his sallow sunken cheeks, and, drawing up his coat sleeves, disclosed an arm which looked as if the bone could be broken at a touch: so sharp and brittle did it appear, beneath its thin covering of flesh.

"Wot have you been a doin' to yourself?" said Sam, recoiling.

"Nothing," replied Job.

"Nothin'!" echoed Sam.

"I have been doin' nothing for many weeks past," said Job; "and eating and drinking almost as little."

Sam took one comprehensive glance at Mr. Trotter's thin face and wretched apparel; and then, seizing him by the arm, commenced dragging him away with great violence.

"Where are you going, Mr. Weller?" said Job, vainly struggling in the powerful grasp of his old enemy.

"Come on," said Sam; "come on!" He deigned no further explanation until they reached the tap; and then called for a pot of porter, which was speedily produced.

"Now," said Sam, "drink that up, ev'ry drop on it, and then turn the pot upside down, to let me see as you've took the med'cine."

"But, my dear Mr. Weller," remonstrated Job.

"Down vith it!" said Sam, peremptorily.

Thus admonished, Mr. Trotter raised the pot to his lips, and, by gentle and almost imperceptible degrees, tilted it into the air. He paused once, and only once, to draw a long breath, but without raising his face from the vessel,

which, in a few moments thereafter, he held out at arm's length, bottom upward. Nothing fell upon the ground but a few particles of froth, which slowly detached themselves from the rim, and trickled lazily down.

"Well done!" said Sam. "How do you find yourself arter it?"

"Better, sir. I think I am better," responded Job.

"O' course you air," said Sam, argumentatively. "It's like puttin' gas in a balloon. I can see with the naked eye that you gets stouter under the operation. Wot do you say to another o' the same di-mensions?"

"I would rather not, I am much obliged to you, sir," replied Job, "much rather not."

"Vell, then, wot do you say to some wittles?" inquired Sam.

"Thanks to your worthy governor, sir," said Mr. Trotter, "we have half a leg of mutton, baked, at a quarter before three, with the potatoes under it to save boiling."

"Wot! Has *he* been a purwidin' for you?" asked Sam, emphatically.

"He has, sir," replied Job. "More than that, Mr. Weller; my master being very ill, he got us a room—we were in a kennel before—and paid for it, sir; and come to look at us, at night, when nobody should know. Mr. Weller," said Job, with real tears in his eyes, for once, "I could serve that gentleman till I fell down dead at his feet."

"I say!" said Sam, "I'll trouble you, my friend! None o' that!"

Job Trotter looked amazed.

"None o' that, I say, young feller," repeated Sam, firmly. "No man serves him but me. And now we're upon it, I'll let you into another secret besides that," said Sam, as he paid for the beer. "I never heerd, mind you, nor read of in story-books, nor see in picters, any angel in tights and gaiters—not even in spectacles, as I remember, though that may ha' been done for anythin' I know to the contrairey—but mark my vords, Job Trotter, he's a reg'lar thorough-bred angel for all that; and let me see the man as wenturs to tell me he knows a better vun." With this defiance, Mr. Weller buttoned up his change in a side pocket, and, with many confirmatory nods and gestures by the way, proceeded in search of the subject of discourse.

They found Mr. Pickwick, in company with Jingle, talk-

ing very earnestly, and not bestowing a look on the groups who were congregated on the racket-ground; they were very motley groups too, and worth the looking at, if it were only in idle curiosity.

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, as Sam and his companion drew nigh, "you will see how your health becomes, and think about it meanwhile. Make the statement out for me when you feel yourself equal to the task, and I will discuss the subject with you when I have considered it. Now, go to your room. You are tired and not strong enough to be out long."

Mr. Alfred Jingle, without one spark of his old animation—with nothing even of the dismal gaiety which he had assumed when Mr. Pickwick first stumbled on him in his misery—bowed low without speaking, and, motioning to Job not to follow him just yet, crept slowly away.

"Curious scene this, is it not, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking good-humouredly round.

"Wery much so, sir," replied Sam. "Wonders 'ull never cease," added Sam, speaking to himself. "I'm wery much mistaken if that 'ere Jingle worn't a doin' somethin' in the water-cart way!"

The area formed by the wall in that part of the Fleet in which Mr. Pickwick stood, was just wide enough to make a good racket-court; one side being formed, of course, by the wall itself and the other by that portion of the prison which looked (or rather would have looked, but for the wall) towards St. Paul's Cathedral. Sauntering or sitting about, in every possible attitude of listless idleness, were a great number of debtors, the major part of whom were waiting in prison until their day of "going up" before the Insolvent Court should arrive; while others had been remanded for various terms, which they were idling away, as they best could. Some were shabby, some were smart, many dirty, a few clean; but there they all lounged, and loitered, and slunk about, with as little spirit or purpose as the beasts in a menagerie.

Lolling from the windows which commanded a view of this promenade, were a number of persons, some in noisy conversation with their acquaintance below, others playing at ball with some adventurous throwers outside, others looking on at the racket-players, or watching the boys as they cried the game. Dirty slipshod women passed and

re-passed, on their way to the cooking-house in one corner of the yard; children screamed, and fought, and played together, in another; the tumbling of the skittles, and the shouts of the players, mingled perpetually with these and a hundred other sounds; and all was noise and tumult—save in a little miserable shed a few yards off, where lay, all quiet and ghastly, the body of the Chancery prisoner who had died the night before, awaiting the mockery of an inquest. The body! It is the lawyer's term for the restless whirling mass of cares and anxieties, affections, hopes, and griefs, that make up the living man. The law *had* his body; and there it lay, clothed in grave clothes, an awful witness to its tender mercy.

"Would you like to see a whistling-shop, sir?" inquired Job Trotter.

"What do you mean?" was Mr. Pickwick's counter inquiry.

"A vistlin' shop, sir," interposed Mr. Weller.

"What is that, Sam? A bird-fancier's?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your heart, no, sir," replied Job; "a whistling-shop, sir, is where they sell spirits." Mr. Job Trotter briefly explained here, that all persons, being prohibited under heavy penalties from conveying spirits into debtors' prisons, and such commodities being highly prized by the ladies and gentlemen confined therein, it had occurred to some speculative turnkey to connive, for certain lucrative considerations, at two or three prisoners retailing the favourite article of gin, for their own profit and advantage.

"This plan, you see, sir, has been gradually introduced into all the prisons for debt," said Mr. Trotter.

"And it has this wery great advantage," said Sam, "that the turnkeys takes wery good care to seize hold o' ev'ry body but them as pays 'em, that attempts the willainy, and wen it gets in the papers they're applauded for their wigilance; so it cuts two ways—frightens other people from the trade, and elewates their own characters."

"Exactly so, Mr. Weller," observed Job.

"Well, but are these rooms never searched, to ascertain whether any spirits are concealed in them?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Cert'nly they are, sir," replied Sam; "but the turnkeys knows beforehand, and gives the word to the wistlers, and you *may* wistle for it wen you go to look."

By this time, Job had tapped at a door, which was opened by a gentleman with an uncombed head, who bolted it after them when they had walked in, and grinned; upon which Job grinned, and Sam also; whereupon Mr. Pickwick, thinking it might be expected of him, kept on smiling to the end of the interview.

The gentleman with the uncombed head appeared quite satisfied with this mute announcement of their business, and, producing a flat stone bottle, which might hold about a couple of quarts, from beneath his bedstead, filled out three glasses of gin, which Job Trotter and Sam disposed of in a most workmanlike manner.

"Any more?" said the whistling gentleman

"No more," replied Job Trotter.

Mr. Pickwick paid, the door was unbolted, and out they came; the uncombed gentleman bestowing a friendly nod upon Mr. Roker, who happened to be passing at the moment.

From this spot, Mr. Pickwick wandered along all the galleries, up and down all the staircases, and once again round the whole area of the yard. The great body of the prison population appeared to be Mivins, and Smangle, and the parson, and the butcher, and the leg, over and over, and over again. There were the same squalor, the same turmoil and noise, the same general characteristics, in every corner; in the best and the worst alike. The whole place seemed restless and troubled; and the people were crowding and flitting to and fro, like the shadows in an uneasy dream.

"I have seen enough," said Mr. Pickwick, as he threw himself into a chair in his little apartment. "My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too. Henceforth I will be a prisoner in my own room."

And Mr. Pickwick steadfastly adhered to this determination. For three long months he remained shut up, all day; only stealing out at night to breathe the air when the greater part of his fellow prisoners were in bed or carousing in their rooms. His health was beginning to suffer from the closeness of the confinement, but neither the often-repeated entreaties of Perker and his friends, nor the still more frequently-repeated warnings and admonitions of Mr. Samuel Weller, could induce him to alter one jot of his inflexible resolution.

CHAPTER XLVI

RECORDS A TOUCHING ACT OF DELICATE FEELING, NOT
UNMIXED WITH PLEASANTRY, ACHIEVED AND PER-
FORMED BY MESSRS. DODSON AND FOGG

It was within a week of the close of the month of July, that a hackney cabriolet, number unrecorded, was seen to proceed at a rapid pace up Goswell Street; three people were squeezed into it besides the driver, who sat in his own particular little dickey at the side; over the apron were hung two shawls, belonging to two small vixenish-looking ladies under the apron; between whom, compressed into a very small compass, was stowed away, a gentleman of heavy and subdued demeanour, who, whenever he ventured to make an observation, was snapped up short by one of the vixenish ladies before-mentioned. Lastly, the two vixenish ladies and the heavy gentleman were giving the driver contradictory directions, all tending to the one point that he should stop at Mrs. Bardell's door; which the heavy gentleman, in direct opposition to, and defiance of, the vixenish ladies, contended was a green door and not a yellow one.

"Stop at the house with the green door, driver," said the heavy gentleman.

"Oh! You perverse creetur!" exclaimed one of the vixenish ladies. "Drive to the ouse with the yellow door, cabmin."

Upon this, the cabman, who in a sudden effort to pull up at the house with the green door, had pulled the horse up so high that he nearly pulled him backward into the cabriolet, let the animal's fore legs down to the ground again, and paused.

"Now vere am I to pull up?" inquired the driver. "Settle it among yourselves. All I ask is, vere?"

Here the contest was renewed with increased violence; and the horse being troubled with a fly on his nose, the cabman humanely employed his leisure in lashing him about the head, on the counter-irritation principle.

"Most wotes carries the day!" said one of the vixenish ladies at length. "The ouse with the yellow door, cabmin."

But after the cabriolet had dashed up, in splendid style, to the house with the yellow door: "making," as one of the vixenish ladies triumphantly said, "acterrally more noise than if one had come in one's own carriage"—and after the driver had dismounted to assist the ladies in getting out—the small round head of Master Thomas Bardell was thrust out of the one pair window of a house with a red door, a few numbers off.

"Aggrawatin' thing!" said the vixenish lady last mentioned, darting a withering glance at the heavy gentleman.

"My dear, it's not my fault," said the gentleman.

"Don't talk to me, you creetur, don't," retorted the lady. "The ouse with the red door, cabmin. Oh! If ever a woman was troubled with a ruffinly creetur, that takes a pride and a pleasure in disgracing his wife on every possible occasion afore strangers, I am that woman!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Raddle," said the other little woman, who was no other than Mrs. Cluppins.

"What have I been a doing of?" asked Mr. Raddle.

"Don't talk to me, don't, you brute, for fear I should be perwoked to forgit my sect and strike you!" said Mrs. Raddle.

While this dialogue was going on, the driver was most ignominiously leading the horse, by the bridle, up to the house with the red door, which Master Bardell had already opened. Here was a mean and low way of arriving at a friend's house! No dashing up, with all the fire and fury of the animal; no jumping down of the driver; no loud knocking at the door; no opening of the apron with a crash at the very last moment, for fear of the ladies sitting in a draught and then the man handing the shawls out, afterwards, as if he were a private coachman! The whole edge of the thing had been taken off; it was flatter than walking.

"Well, Tommy," said Mrs. Cluppins, "How's your poor dear mother?"

"Oh, she's very well," replied Master Bardell. "She's in

the front parlour, all ready. I'm ready too, I am." Here Master Bardell put his hands in his pockets, and jumped off and on the bottom step of the door.

"Is anybody else a goin', Tommy?" said Mrs. Cluppins, arranging her pelerine.

"Mrs. Sanders is going, she is," replied Tommy. "I'm going too, I am."

"Drat the boy," said little Mrs. Cluppins. "He thinks of nobody but himself. Here, Tommy, dear."

"Well," said Master Bardell.

"Who else is a goin', lovey?" said Mrs. Cluppins in an insinuating manner.

"Oh! Mrs. Rogers is a goin'." replied Master Bardell, opening his eyes very wide as he delivered the intelligence.

"What! The lady as has taken the lodgings!" ejaculated Mrs. Cluppins.

Master Bardell put his hands deeper down into his pockets, and nodded exactly thirty-five times, to imply that it was the lady lodger, and no other.

"Bless us!" said Mrs. Cluppins. "It's quite a party!"

"Ah, if you knew what was in the cupboard, you'd say so," replied Master Bardell.

"What is there, Tommy?" said Mrs. Cluppins, coaxingly. "You'll tell *me*, Tommy, I know."

"No, I won't," replied Master Bardell, shaking his head, and applying himself to the bottom step again.

"Drat the child!" muttered Mrs. Cluppins. "What a prowokin' little wretch it is! Come, Tommy, tell your dear Cluppy."

"Mother said I wasn't to," rejoined Master Bardell. "I'm a goin' to have some, I am." Cheered by this prospect, the precocious boy applied himself to his infantile treadmill, with increased vigour.

The above examination of a child of tender years, took place while Mr. and Mrs. Raddle and the cab-driver were having an altercation concerning the fare: which, terminating at this point in favour of the cabman, Mrs. Raddle came up tottering.

"Lauk, Mary Ann! what's the matter?" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"It's put me all over in such a tremble, Betsy," replied Mrs. Raddle. "Raddle ain't like a man; he leaves everythink to me."

This was scarcely fair upon the unfortunate Mr. Raddle, who had been thrust aside by his good lady in the commencement of the dispute, and peremptorily commanded to hold his tongue. He had no opportunity of defending himself, however, for Mrs. Raddle gave unequivocal signs of fainting; which, being perceived from the parlour window, Mrs. Bardell, Mrs. Sanders, the lodger, and the lodger's servant, darted precipitately out, and conveyed her into the house: all talking at the same time, and giving utterance to various expressions of pity and condolence, as if she were one of the most suffering mortals on earth. Being conveyed into the front parlour, she was there deposited on a sofa; and the lady from the first floor running up to the first floor, returned with a bottle of sal volatile, which, holding Mrs. Raddle tight round the neck, she applied in all womanly kindness and pity to her nose, until that lady with many plunges and struggles was fain to declare herself decidedly better.

"Ah, poor thing!" said Mrs. Rogers, "I know what her feelin's is, too well."

"Ah, poor thing! so do I," said Mrs. Sanders: and then all the ladies moaned in unison, and said *they* knew what it was, and they pitied her from their hearts, they did. Even the lodger's little servant, who was thirteen years old, and three feet high, murmured her sympathy.

"But what's been the matter?" said Mrs. Bardell.

"Ah, what has decomposed you, ma'am?" inquired Mrs. Rogers.

"I have been a good deal flurried," replied Mrs. Raddle, in a reproachful manner. Thereupon the ladies cast indignant looks at Mr. Raddle.

"Why, the fact is," said that unhappy gentleman, stepping forward, "when we alighted at this door, a dispute arose with the driver of the cabrioily——" A loud scream from his wife, at the mention of this word, rendered all further explanation inaudible.

"You'd better leave us to bring her round, Raddle," said Mrs. Cluppins. "She'll never get better as long as you're here."

All the ladies concurred in this opinion; so Mr. Raddle was pushed out of the room, and requested to give himself an airing in the back yard. Which he did for about a quarter of an hour, when Mrs. Bardell announced to him

with a solemn face that he might come in now, but that he must be very careful how he behaved towards his wife. She knew he didn't mean to be unkind; but Mary Ann was very far from strong, and, if he didn't take care, he might lose her when he least expected it, which would be a very dreadful reflection for him afterwards; and so on. All this, Mr. Raddle heard with great submission, and presently returned to the parlour in a most lamb-like manner.

"Why, Mrs. Rogers, ma'am," said Mrs. Bardell, "you've never been introduced, I declare! Mr. Raddle, ma'am; Mrs. Cluppins, ma'am; Mrs. Raddle, ma'am."

—"Which is Mrs. Cluppins's sister," suggested Mrs. Sanders.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Rogers, graciously; for she was the lodger, and her servant was in waiting, so she was more gracious than intimate, in right of her position. "Oh, indeed!"

Mrs. Raddle smiled sweetly, Mr. Raddle bowed, and Mrs. Cluppins said "she was sure she was very happy to have a opportunity of being known to a lady which she had heard so much in favour of, as Mrs. Rogers." A compliment which the last-named lady acknowledged with graceful condescension.

"Well, Mr. Raddle," said Mrs. Bardell; "I'm sure you ought to feel very much honoured at you and Tommy being the only gentlemen to escort so many ladies all the way to the Spaniards, at Hampstead. Don't you think he ought, Mrs. Rogers, ma'am?"

"Oh, certainly, ma'am," replied Mrs. Rogers; after whom all the other ladies responded "Oh, certainly."

"Of course I feel it, ma'am," said Mr. Raddle, rubbing his hands, and evincing a slight tendency to brighten up a little. "Indeed, to tell you the truth, I said, as we was a coming along in the cabrioily——"

At the recapitulation of the word which awakened so many painful recollections, Mrs. Raddle applied her handkerchief to her eyes again, and uttered a half-suppressed scream; so Mrs. Bardell frowned upon Mr. Raddle, to intimate that he had better not say anything more, and desired Mrs. Rogers's servant, with an air, to "put the wine on."

This was the signal for displaying the hidden treasures of the closet, which comprised sundry plates of oranges and

biscuits, and a bottle of old crusted port—that at one and nine—with another of the celebrated East India sherry at fourteenpence, which were all produced in honour of the lodger, and afforded unlimited satisfaction to everybody. After great consternation had been excited in the mind of Mrs. Cluppins, by an attempt on the part of Tommy to recount how he had been cross-examined regarding the cupboard then in action, (which was fortunately nipped in the bud by his imbibing half a glass of the old crusted “the wrong way,” and thereby endangering his life for some seconds,) the party walked forth, in quest of a Hampstead stage. This was soon found, and in a couple of hours they all arrived safely in the Spaniards Tea-gardens, where the luckless Mr. Raddle’s very first act nearly occasioned his good lady a relapse; it being neither more nor less than to order tea for seven, whereas (as the ladies one and all remarked), what could have been easier than for Tommy to have drank out of anybody’s cup—or everybody’s, if that was all—when the waiter wasn’t looking: which would have saved one head of tea, and the tea just as good!

However, there was no help for it, and the tea-tray came, with seven cups and saucers, and bread and butter on the same scale. Mrs. Bardell was unanimously voted into the chair, and Mrs. Rogers being stationed on her right hand, and Mrs. Raddle on her left, the meal proceeded with great merriment and success.

“How sweet the country is, to-be-sure!” sighed Mrs. Rogers; “I almost wish I lived in it always.”

“Oh, you wouldn’t like that, ma’am,” replied Mrs. Bardell, rather hastily; for it was not at all advisable, with reference to the lodgings, to encourage such notions; “you wouldn’t like it, ma’am.”

“Oh! I should think you was a deal too lively and sought-after, to be content with the country, ma’am,” said little Mrs. Cluppins.

“Perhaps I am, ma’am. Perhaps I am,” sighed the first-floor lodger.

“For lone people as have got nobody to care for them, or take care of them, or as have been hurt in their mind, or that kind of thing,” observed Mr. Raddle, plucking up a little cheerfulness, and looking round, “the country is all very well. The country for a wounded spirit, they say.”

Now, of all things in the world that the unfortunate man

could have said, any would have been preferable to this. Of course Mrs. Bardell burst into tears, and requested to be led from the table instantly; upon which the affectionate child began to cry too, most dismally.

"Would anybody believe, ma'am," exclaimed Mrs. Raddle, turning fiercely to the first-floor lodger, "that a woman could be married to such a unmanly creetur, which can tamper with a woman's feelings as he does, every hour in the day, ma'am?"

"My dear," remonstrated Mr. Raddle, "I didn't mean anything, my dear."

"You didn't mean!" repeated Mrs. Raddle, with great scorn and contempt. "Go away. I can't bear the sight on you, you brute."

"You must *not* flurry yourself, Mary Ann," interposed Mrs. Cluppins. "You really must consider yourself, my dear, which you never do. Now go away, Raddle, there's a good soul, or you'll only aggravate her."

"You had better take your tea by yourself, sir, indeed," said Mrs. Rogers, again applying the smelling-bottle.

Mrs. Sanders, who according to custom was very busy with the bread and butter, expressed the same opinion, and Mr. Raddle quietly retired.

After this, there was a great hoisting up of Master Bardell, who was rather a large size for hugging, into his mother's arms: in which operation he got his boots in the tea-board, and occasioned some confusion among the cups and saucers. But that description of fainting fits, which is contagious among ladies, seldom lasts long; so when he had been well kissed, and a little cried over, Mrs. Bardell recovered, set him down again, wondered how she could have been so foolish, and poured out some more tea.

It was at this moment, that the sound of approaching wheels was heard, and that the ladies, looking up, saw a hackney-coach stop at the garden-gate.

"More company!" said Mrs. Sanders.

"It's a gentleman," said Mrs. Raddle.

"Well, if it ain't Mr. Jackson, the young man from Dodson and Fogg's!" cried Mrs. Bardell. "Why, gracious! Surely Mr. Pickwick can't have paid the damages."

"Or hofferred marriage!" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"Dear me, how slow the gentleman is," exclaimed Mrs. Rogers: "Why doesn't he make haste?"

As the lady spoke these words, Mr. Jackson turned from the coach where he had been addressing some observations to a shabby man in black leggings, who had just emerged from the vehicle with a thick ash stick in his hand, and made his way to the place where the ladies were seated; winding his hair round the brim of his hat as he came along.

"Is anything the matter?" Has anything taken place, Mr. Jackson?" said Mrs. Bardell, eagerly.

"Nothing whatever, ma'an," replied Mr. Jackson. "How de do, ladies? I have to ask pardon, ladies, for intruding—but the law, ladies—the law." With this apology Mr. Jackson smiled, made a comprehensive bow, and gave his hair another wind. Mrs. Rogers whispered Mrs. Raddle that he was really a elegant young man.

"I called in Goswell Street," resumed Jackson, "and hearing that you were here, from the slavey, took a coach and came on. Our people want you down in the city directly, Mrs. Bardell."

"Lor!" ejaculated that lady, starting at the sudden nature of the communication.

"Yes," said Jackson, biting his lip. "It's very important and pressing business, which can't be postponed on any account. Indeed, Dodson expressly said so to me, and so did Fogg. I've kept the coach on purpose for you to go back in."

"How very strange!" exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

The ladies agreed that it *was* very strange, but were unanimously of opinion that it must be very important, or Dodson and Fogg would never have sent: and further, that the business being urgent, she ought to repair to Dodson and Fogg's without any delay.

There was a certain degree of pride and importance about being wanted by one's lawyers in such a monstrous hurry, that was by no means displeasing to Mrs. Bardell, especially as it might be reasonably supposed to enhance her consequence in the eyes of the first-floor lodger. She simpered a little, affected extreme vexation and hesitation, and at last arrived at the conclusion that she supposed she must go.

"But won't you refresh yourself after your walk, Mr. Jackson?" said Mrs. Bardell, persuasively.

"Why, really there ain't much time to lose," replied Jackson; "and I've got a friend here," he continued, looking towards the man with the ash stick.

"Oh, ask your friend to come here, sir," said Mrs. Bardell. "Pray ask your friend here, sir."

"Why, thankee, I'd rather not," said Mr. Jackson, with some embarrassment of manner. "He's not much used to ladies' society, and it makes him bashful. If you'll order the waiter to deliver him anything short, he won't drink it off at once, won't he!—only try him!" Mr. Jackson's fingers wandered playfully round his nose, at this portion of his discourse, to warn his hearers that he was speaking ironically.

The waiter was at once despatched to the bashful gentleman, and the bashful gentleman took something; Mr. Jackson also took something, and the ladies took something, for hospitality's sake. Mr. Jackson then said he was afraid it was time to go; upon which, Mrs. Sanders, Mrs. Cluppins, and Tommy (who it was arranged should accompany Mrs. Bardell: leaving the others to Mr. Raddle's protection), got into the coach.

"Isaac," said Jackson, as Mrs. Bardell prepared to get in: looking up at the man with the ash stick, who was seated on the box, smoking a cigar.

"Well?"

"*This* is Mrs. Bardell."

"Oh, I know'd that, long ago," said the man.

Mrs. Bardell got in, Mr. Jackson got in after her, and away they drove. Mrs. Bardell could not help ruminating on what Mr. Jackson's friend had said. Shrewd creatures, those lawyers. Lord bless us, how they find people out!

"Sad thing about these costs of our people's, ain't it?" said Jackson, when Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders had fallen asleep; "your bill of costs, I mean."

"I'm very sorry they can't get them," replied Mrs. Bardell. "But if you law-gentlemen do these things on speculation, why you must get a loss now and then, you know."

"You gave them a *cognovit* for the amount of your costs, after the trial, I'm told?" said Jackson.

"Yes. Just as a matter of form," replied Mrs. Bardell.

"Certainly," replied Jackson, drily. "Quite a matter of form. Quite."

On they drove, and Mrs. Bardell fell asleep. She was awakened, after some time, by the stopping of the coach.

"Bless us!" said the lady. "Are we at Freeman's Court?"

"We're not going quite so far," replied Jackson. "Have the goodness to step out."

Mrs. Bardell, not yet thoroughly awake, complied. It was a curious place: a large wall, with a gate in the middle, and a gas-light burning inside.

"Now, ladies," cried the man with the ash stick, looking into the coach, and shaking Mrs. Sanders to wake her. "Come!" Rousing her friend, Mrs. Sanders alighted. Mrs. Bardell, leaning on Jackson's arm, and leading Tommy by the hand, had already entered the porch. They followed.

The room they turned into, was even more odd-looking than the porch. Such a number of men standing about! And they stared so!

"What place is this?" inquired Mrs. Bardell, pausing.

"Only one of our public offices," replied Jackson, hurrying her through a door, and looking round to see that the other women were following. "Look sharp, Isaac!"

"Safe and sound," replied the man with the ash stick. The door swung heavily after them, and they descended a small flight of steps.

"Here we are, at last. All right and tight, Mrs. Bardell!" said Jackson, looking exultingly round.

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Bardell, with a palpitating heart.

"Just this," replied Jackson, drawing her a little on one side; "don't be frightened, Mrs. Bardell. There never was a more delicate man than Dodson, ma'am, or a more humane man than Fogg. It was their duty, in the way of business, to take you in execution for them costs; but they were anxious to spare your feelings as much as they could. What a comfort it must be, to you, to think how it's been done! This is the Fleet, ma'am. Wish you good night, Mrs. Bardell. Good night, Tommy!"

As Jackson hurried away in company with the man with the ash stick, another man with a key in his hand, who had been looking on, led the bewildered female to a second short flight of steps leading to a doorway. Mrs. Bardell screamed violently; Tommy roared; Mrs. Cluppins shrunk within herself; and Mrs. Sanders made off without more ado. For, there, stood the injured Mr. Pickwick, taking his nightly allowance of air; and beside him leant Samuel Weller, who,

seeing Mrs. Bardell, took his hat off with mock reverence, while his master turned indignantly on his heel.

"Don't bother the woman," said the turnkey to Weller: "she's just come in."

"A pris'ner!" said Sam, quickly replacing his hat. "Who's the plaintives? What for? Speak up, old feller."

"Dodson and Fogg," replied the man; "execution on cognovit for costs."

"Here Job, Job!" shouted Sam, dashing into the passage. "Run to Mr. Perker's, Job. I want him directly. I see some good in this. Here's a game. Hooray! were's the gov'nor?"

But there was no reply to these inquiries, for Job had started furiously off, the instant he received his commission, and Mrs. Bardell had fainted in real downright earnest.



MRS. BARDELL ENCOUNTERS MR. PICKWICK IN THE PRISON

CHAPTER XLVII

IS CHIEFLY DEVOTED TO MATTERS OF BUSINESS, AND THE
TEMPORAL ADVANTAGE OF DODSON AND FOGG.
MR. WINKLE RE-APPEARS UNDER EXTRAORDINARY
CIRCUMSTANCES. MR. PICKWICK'S BENEVOLENCE
PROVES STRONGER THAN HIS OBSTINACY

JOB TROTTER, abating nothing of his speed, ran up Holborn; sometimes in the middle of the road, sometimes on the pavement, sometimes in the gutter, as the chances of getting along varied with the press of men, women, children, and coaches in each division of the thoroughfare; regardless of all obstacles, he stopped not for an instant until he reached the gate of Gray's Inn. Notwithstanding all the expedition he had used, however, the gate had been closed a good half hour when he reached it, and by the time he had discovered Mr. Perker's laundress, who lived with a married daughter, who had bestowed her hand upon a non-resident waiter, who occupied the one-pair of some number in some street closely adjoining to some brewery somewhere behind Gray's Inn Lane, it was within fifteen minutes of closing the prison for the night. Mr. Lowten had still to be ferreted out from the back parlour of the Magpie and Stump; and Job had scarcely accomplished this object, and communicated Sam Weller's message, when the clock struck ten.

"There," said Lowten, "it's too late now. You can't get in to-night; "you've got the key of the street, my friend."

"Never mind me," replied Job. "I can sleep anywhere. But won't it be better to see Mr. Perker to-night, so that we may be there, the first thing in the morning?"

"Why," responded Lowten, after a little consideration, "if it was in anybody else's case, Perker wouldn't be best pleased at my going up to his house; but as it's Mr. Pickwick's, I think I may venture to take a cab and charge it to the office." Deciding on this line of conduct, Mr. Lowten took

up his hat, and begging the assembled company to appoint a deputy chairman during his temporary absence, led the way to the nearest coach-stand. Summoning the cab of most promising appearance, he directed the driver to repair to Montague Place, Russell Square.

Mr. Perker had had a dinner party that day, as was testified by the appearance of lights in the drawing-room windows, the sound of an improved grand piano, and an improvable cabinet voice issuing therefrom, and a rather overpowering smell of meat which pervaded the steps and entry. In fact a couple of very good country agencies happening to come up to town, at the same time, an agreeable little party had been got together to meet them: comprising Mr. Snicks the Life Office Secretary, Mr. Prosee the eminent counsel, three solicitors, one commissioner of bankrupts, a special pleader from the Temple, a small-eyed peremptory young gentleman, his pupil, who had written a lively book about the law of demises, with a vast quantity of marginal notes and references; and several other eminent and distinguished personages. From this society, little Mr. Perker detached himself, on his clerk being announced in a whisper; and repairing to the dining-room, there found Mr. Lowten and Job Trotter looking very dim and shadowy by the light of a kitchen candle, which the gentleman who condescended to appear in plush shorts and cottons for a quarterly stipend, had, with a becoming contempt for the clerk and all things appertaining to "the office," placed upon the table.

"Now, Lowten," said little Mr. Perker, shutting the door, "what's the matter? No important letter come in a parcel, is there?"

"No, sir," replied Lowten. "This is a messenger from Mr. Pickwick, sir."

"From Pickwick, eh?" said the little man, turning quickly to Job. "Well, what is it?"

"Dodson and Fogg have taken Mrs. Bardell in execution for her costs, sir," said Job.

"No!" exclaimed Perker, putting his hands in his pockets, and reclining against the sideboard.

"Yes," said Job. "It seems they got a cognovit out of her, for the amount of 'em, directly after the trial."

"By Jove!" said Perker, taking both hands out of his pockets, and striking the knuckles of his right against the

palm of his left, emphatically, "those are the cleverest scamps I ever had anything to do with!"

"The sharpest practitioners I ever knew, sir," observed Lowten.

"Sharp!" echoed Perker. "There's no knowing where to have them."

"Very true, sir, there is not," replied Lowten: and then, both master and man pondered for a few seconds, with animated countenances, as if they were reflecting upon one of the most beautiful and ingenious discoveries that the intellect of man had ever made. When they had in some measure recovered from their trance of admiration, Job Trotter discharged himself of the rest of his commission. Perker nodded his head thoughtfully, and pulled out his watch.

"At ten precisely, I will be there," said the little man. "Sam is quite right. Tell him so. Will you take a glass of wine, Lowten?"

"No, thank you, sir."

"You mean yes, I think," said the little man, turning to the sideboard for a decanter and glasses.

As Lowten *did* mean yes, he said no more on the subject, but inquired of Job, in an audible whisper, whether the portrait of Perker, which hung opposite the fire-place, wasn't a wonderful likeness, to which Job of course replied that it was. The wine being by this time poured out, Lowten drank to Mrs. Perker and the children and Job to Perker. The gentleman in the plush shorts and cottons considering it no part of his duty to show the people from the office out, consistently declined to answer the bell, and they showed themselves out. The attorney betook himself to his drawing-room, the clerk to the Magpie and Stump, and Job to Covent Garden Market to spend the night in a vegetable basket.

Punctually at the appointed hour next morning, the good-natured little attorney tapped at Mr. Pickwick's door, which was opened with great alacrity by Sam Weller.

"Mr. Perker, sir," said Sam, announcing the visitor to Mr. Pickwick, who was sitting at the window in a thoughtful attitude. "Wery glad you've looked in accidentally, sir. I rather think the gov'nor wants to have a word and a half with you, sir."

Perker bestowed a look of intelligence on Sam, intimating

that he understood he was not to say he had been sent for: and beckoning him to approach, whispered briefly in his ear.

"You don't mean that 'ere, sir?" said Sam, starting back in excessive surprise.

Perker nodded and smiled.

Mr. Samuel Weller looked at the little lawyer, then at Mr. Pickwick, then at the ceiling, then at Perker again; grinned, laughed outright, and finally, catching up his hat from the carpet, without further explanation, disappeared.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Perker with astonishment. "What has put Sam into this most extraordinary state?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Perker. "Come, my dear sir, draw up your chair to the table. I have a good deal to say to you."

"What papers are those?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, as the little man deposited on the table a small bundle of documents tied with red tape.

"The papers in Bardell and Pickwick," replied Perker, undoing the knot with his teeth.

Mr. Pickwick grated the legs of his chair against the ground; and throwing himself into it, folded his hands and looked sternly—if Mr. Pickwick ever could look sternly—at his legal friend.

"You don't like to hear the name of the cause?" said the little man, still busying himself with the knot.

"No, I do not indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Sorry for that," resumed Perker, "because it will form the subject of our conversation."

"I would rather that the subject should be never mentioned between us, Perker," interposed Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

"Pooh, pooh, my dear sir," said the little man, untying the bundle, and glancing eagerly at Mr. Pickwick out of the corners of his eyes. "It must be mentioned. I have come here on purpose. Now, are you ready to hear what I have to say, my dear sir? No hurry; if you are not, I can wait. I have this morning's paper here. Your time shall be mine. There!" Hereupon, the little man threw one leg over the other, and made a show of beginning to read with great composure and application.

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick, with a sigh, but soften-

ing into a smile at the same time. "Say what you have to say; it's the old story, I suppose?"

"With a difference, my dear sir; with a difference," rejoined Perker, deliberately folding up the paper and putting it into his pocket again. "Mrs. Bardell, the plaintiff in the action, is within these walls, sir."

"I know it," was Mr. Pickwick's reply.

"Very good," retorted Perker. "And you know how she comes here, I suppose; I mean on what grounds, and at whose suit?"

"Yes; at least I have heard Sam's account of the matter," said Mr. Pickwick, with affected carelessness.

"Sam's account of the matter," replied Perker, "is, I will venture to say, a perfectly correct one. Well now, my dear sir, the first question I have to ask, is, whether this woman is to remain here?"

"To remain here!" echoed Mr. Pickwick.

"To remain here, my dear sir," rejoined Perker, leaning back in his chair and looking steadily at his client.

"How can you ask me?" said that gentleman. "It rests with Dodson and Fogg; you know that, very well."

"I know nothing of the kind," retorted Perker, firmly. "It does *not* rest with Dodson and Fogg; you know the men, my dear sir, as well as I do. It rests solely, wholly, and entirely with you."

"With me!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, rising nervously from his chair, and reseating himself directly afterwards.

The little man gave a double knock on the lid of his snuff-box, opened it, took a great pinch, shut it up again, and repeated the words, "With you."

"I say, my dear sir," resumed the little man, who seemed to gather confidence from the snuff; "I say, that her speedy liberation or perpetual imprisonment rests with you, and with you alone. Hear me out, my dear sir, if you please, and do not be so very energetic, for it will only put you into a perspiration and do no good whatever. I say," continued Perker, checking off each position on a different finger, as he laid it down; "I say that nobody but you can rescue her from this den of wretchedness; and that you can only do that, by paying the costs of this suit—both of plaintiff and defendant—into the hands of these Freeman's Court sharks. Now pray be quiet, my dear sir."

Mr. Pickwick, whose face had been undergoing most sur-

prising changes during this speech, and who was evidently on the verge of a strong burst of indignation, calmed his wrath as well as he could. Perker, strengthening his argumentative powers with another pinch of snuff, proceeded.

"I have seen the woman, this morning. By paying the costs, you can obtain a full release and discharge from the damages; and further—this I know is a far greater object of consideration with you, my dear sir—a voluntary statement, under her hand, in the form of a letter to me, that this business was, from the very first, fomented, and encouraged and brought about, by these men, Dodson and Fogg; that she deeply regrets ever having been the instrument of annoyance or injury to you; and that she entreats me to intercede with you, and implore your pardon."

"If I pay her costs for her," said Mr. Pickwick, indignantly. "A valuable document, indeed!"

"No *if* in the case, my dear sir," said Perker, triumphantly. "There is the very letter I speak of. Brought to my office by another woman at nine o'clock this morning, before I had set foot in this place, or held any communication with Mrs. Bardell, upon my honour." Selecting the letter from the bundle, the little lawyer laid it at Mr. Pickwick's elbow, and took snuff for two consecutive minutes, without winking.

"Is this all you have to say to me?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, mildly.

"Not quite," replied Perker. "I cannot undertake to say, at this moment, whether the wording of the *cognovit*, the nature of the ostensible consideration, and the proof we can get together about the whole conduct of the suit, will be sufficient to justify an indictment for conspiracy. I fear not, my dear sir; they are too clever for that, I doubt. I do mean to say, however, that the whole facts, taken together, will be sufficient to justify you, in the minds of all reasonable men. And now, my dear sir, I put it to you. This one hundred and fifty pounds, or whatever it may be—take it in round numbers—is nothing to you. A jury has decided against you; well, their verdict is wrong, but still they decided as they thought right, and it is against you. You have now an opportunity, on easy terms, of placing yourself in a much higher position than you ever could, by remaining here; which would only be imputed, by people who didn't

know you, to sheer dogged, wrongheaded, brutal obstinacy : nothing else, my dear sir, believe me. Can you hesitate to avail yourself of it, when it restores you to your friends, your old pursuits, your health and amusements ; when it liberates your faithful and attached servant, whom you otherwise doom to imprisonment for the whole of your life ; and above all, when it enables you to take the very magnanimous revenge—which I know, my dear sir, is one after your own heart—of releasing this woman from a scene of misery and debauchery, to which no man should ever be consigned, if I had my will, but the infliction of which on any woman, is even more frightful and barbarous. Now I ask you, my dear sir, not only as your legal adviser, but as your very true friend, will you let slip the occasion of attaining all these objects, and doing all this good, for the paltry consideration of a few pounds finding their way into the pockets of a couple of rascals, to whom it makes no manner of difference, except that the more they gain, the more they'll seek, and so the sooner be led into some piece of knavery that must end in a crash ? I have put these considerations to you, my dear sir, very feebly and imperfectly, but I ask you to think of them. Turn them over in your mind as long as you please. I wait here most patiently for your answer."

Before Mr. Pickwick could reply ; before Mr. Perker had taken one twentieth part of the snuff with which so unusually long an address imperatively required to be followed up ; there was a low murmuring of voices outside, and then a hesitating knock at the door.

"Dear, dear," exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, who had been evidently roused by his friend's appeal ; "what an annoyance that door is ! Who is that ?"

"Me, sir," replied Sam Weller, putting in his head.

"I can't speak to you just now, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I am engaged, at this moment, Sam."

"Beg your pardon, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller. "But here's a lady here, sir, as says she's somethin' wery partickler to disclose."

"I can't see any lady," replied Mr. Pickwick, whose mind was filled with visions of Mrs. Bardell.

"I wouldn't make too sure o' that, sir," urged Mr. Weller, shaking his head. "If you know'd who was near, sir, I rayther think you'd change your note. As the hawk

remarked to himself with a cheerful laugh, ven he heerd the robin redbreast a singin' round the corner."

"Who is it?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Will you see her, sir?" asked Mr. Weller, holding the door in his hand as if he had some curious live animal on the other side.

"I suppose I must," said Mr. Pickwick, looking at Perker.

"Well then, all in to begin!" cried Sam. "Sound the gong, draw up the curtain, and enter the two conspiraytors."

As Sam Weller spoke, he threw the door open, and there rushed tumultuously into the room, Mr. Nathaniel Winkle: leading after him by the hand, the identical young lady who at Dingley Dell had worn the boots with the fur round the tops, and who, now a very pleasing compound of blushes and confusion and lilac silk and a smart bonnet and a rich lace veil, looked prettier than ever.

"Miss Arabella Allen!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, rising from his chair.

"No," replied Mr. Winkle, dropping on his knees, "Mrs. Winkle. Pardon, my dear friend, pardon!"

Mr. Pickwick could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses, and perhaps would not have done so, but for the corroborative testimony afforded by the smiling countenance of Perker, and the bodily presence, in the background, of Sam and the pretty housemaid; who appeared to contemplate the proceedings with the liveliest satisfaction.

"Oh, Mr. Pickwick!" said Arabella, in a low voice, as if alarmed at the silence. "Can you forgive my imprudence?"

Mr. Pickwick returned no verbal response to this appeal; but he took off his spectacles in great haste, and seizing both the young lady's hands in his, kissed her a great number of times—perhaps a greater number than was absolutely necessary—and then, still retaining one of her hands, told Mr. Winkle he was an audacious young dog, and bade him get up. This, Mr. Winkle, who had been for some seconds scratching his nose with the brim of his hat, in a penitent manner, did; whereupon Mr. Pickwick slapped him on the back several times, and then shook hands heartily with Perker, who, not to be behind-hand in the compliments of the occasion, saluted both the bride and the pretty house-



MR. WINKLE RETURNS UNDER EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

maid with right good will, and, having wrung Mr. Winkle's hand most cordially, wound up his demonstrations of joy by taking snuff enough to set any half dozen men with ordinarily constructed noses, a-sneezing for life.

"Why, my dear girl," said Mr. Pickwick, "how has all this come about? Come! Sit down, and let me hear it all. How well she looks, doesn't she, Perker?" added Mr. Pickwick, surveying Arabella's face with a look of as much pride and exultation, as if she had been his daughter.

"Delightful, my dear sir," replied the little man. "If I were not a married man myself, I should be disposed to envy you, you dog." Thus expressing himself, the little lawyer gave Mr. Winkle a poke in the chest, which that gentleman reciprocated; after which they both laughed very loudly, but not so loudly as Mr. Samuel Weller. Who had just relieved his feelings by kissing the pretty housemaid, under cover of the cupboard-door.

"I can never be grateful enough to you, Sam, I am sure," said Arabella, with the sweetest smile imaginable. "I shall not forget your exertions in the garden at Clifton."

"Don't say nothin' wotever about it, ma'm," replied Sam. "I only assisted natur', ma'm; as the doctor said to the boy's mother, arter he'd bled him to death."

"Mary, my dear, sit down," said Mr. Pickwick, cutting short these compliments. "Now then; how long have you been married, eh?"

Arabella looked bashfully at her lord and master, who replied, "Only three days."

"Only three days, eh?" said Mr. Pickwick. "Why, what have you been doing these three months?"

"Ah, to be sure!" interposed Perker; "come! Account for this idleness. You see Pickwick's only astonishment is, that it wasn't all over, months ago."

"Why, the fact is," replied Mr. Winkle, looking at his blushing young wife, "that I could not persuade Bella to run away, for a long time. And when I had persuaded her, it was a long time more, before we could find an opportunity. Mary had to give a month's warning, too, before she could leave her place next door, and we couldn't possibly have done it without her assistance."

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, who by this time had resumed his spectacles, and was looking from Arabella to Winkle, and from Winkle to Arabella, with as

much delight depicted in his countenance as warm-heartedness and kindly feeling can communicate to the human face: "upon my word! you seem to have been very systematic in your proceedings. And is your brother acquainted with all this, my dear?"

"Oh, no, no," replied Arabella, changing colour. "Dear Mr. Pickwick, he must only know it from you—from your lips alone. He is so violent, so prejudiced, and has been so—so anxious in behalf of his friend, Mr. Sawyer," added Arabella, looking down, "that I fear the consequences dreadfully."

"Ah, to be sure," said Perker gravely. "You must take this matter in hand for them, my dear sir. These young men will respect you, when they would listen to nobody else. You must prevent mischief, my dear sir. Hot blood, hot blood." And the little man took a warning pinch, and shook his head doubtfully.

"You forget, my love," said Mr. Pickwick, gently, "you forget that I am a prisoner."

"No, indeed I do not, my dear sir," replied Arabella. "I never have forgotten it. I have never ceased to think how great your sufferings must have been in this shocking place. But I hoped that what no consideration for yourself would induce you to do, a regard to our happiness, might. If my brother hears of this, first, from you, I feel certain we shall be reconciled. He is my only relation in the world, Mr. Pickwick, and unless you plead for me, I fear I have lost even him. I have done wrong, very, very wrong, I know." Here poor Arabella hid her face in her handkerchief, and wept bitterly.

Mr. Pickwick's nature was a good deal worked upon, by these same tears; but when Mrs. Winkle, drying her eyes, took to coaxing and entreating in the sweetest tones of a very sweet voice, he became particularly restless, and evidently undecided how to act. As was evinced by sundry nervous rubbings of his spectacle-glasses, nose, tights, head, and gaiters.

Taking advantage of these symptoms of indecision, Mr. Perker (to whom, it appeared, the young couple had driven straight that morning) urged with legal point and shrewdness that Mr. Winkle, senior, was still unacquainted with the important rise in life's flight of steps which his son had taken; that the future expectations of the said son

depended entirely upon the said Winkle, senior, continuing to regard him with undiminished feelings of affection and attachment, which it was very unlikely he would, if this great event were long kept a secret from him; that Mr. Pickwick, repairing to Bristol to seek Mr. Allen, might, with equal reason, repair to Birmingham to seek Mr. Winkle, senior; lastly, that Mr. Winkle, senior, had good right and title to consider Mr. Pickwick as in some degree the guardian and adviser of his son, and that it consequently behoved that gentleman, and was indeed due to his personal character, to acquaint the aforesaid Winkle, senior, personally, and by word of mouth, with the whole circumstances of the case, and with the share he had taken in the transaction.

Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass arrived, most opportunely, in this stage of the pleadings, and as it was necessary to explain to them all that had occurred, together with the various reasons pro and con, the whole of the arguments were gone over again, after which everybody urged every argument in his own way, and at his own length. And, at last, Mr. Pickwick, fairly argued and remonstrated out of all his resolutions, and being in imminent danger of being argued and remonstrated out of his wits, caught Arabella in his arms, and declaring that she was a very amiable creature, and that he didn't know how it was, but he had always been very fond of her from the first, said he could never find it in his heart to stand in the way of young people's happiness, and they might do with him as they pleased.

Mr. Weller's first act, on hearing this concession, was to despatch Job Trotter to the illustrious Mr. Pell, with an authority to deliver to the bearer the formal discharge which his prudent parent had had the foresight to leave in the hands of that learned gentleman, in case it should be, at any time, required on an emergency; his next proceeding was, to invest his whole stock of ready money, in the purchase of five-and-twenty gallons of mild porter: which he himself dispensed on the racket ground to everybody who would partake of it; this done, he hurra'd in divers parts of the building until he lost his voice, and then quietly relapsed into his usual collected and philosophical condition.

At three o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Pickwick took a last look at his little room, and made his way, as well as he could, through the throng of debtors who pressed eagerly

forward to shake him by the hand, until they reached the lodge steps. He turned here, to look about him, and his eye lightened as he did so. In all the crowd of wan, emaciated faces, he saw not one which was not the happier for his sympathy and charity.

"Perker," said Mr. Pickwick, beckoning one young man towards him, "this is Mr. Jingle, whom I spoke to you about."

"Very good, my dear sir," replied Perker, looking hard at Jingle. "You will see me again, young man, to-morrow. I hope you may live to remember and feel deeply, what I shall have to communicate, sir."

Jingle bowed respectfully, trembled very much as he took Mr. Pickwick's proffered hand, and withdrew.

"Job you know, I think?" said Mr. Pickwick, presenting that gentleman.

"I know the rascal," replied Perker, good-humouredly. "See after your friend, and be in the way to-morrow at one. Do you hear? Now, is there anything more?"

"Nothing," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "You have delivered the little parcel I gave you for your old landlord, Sam?"

"I have, sir," replied Sam. "He bust out a cryin', sir, and said you wos wery gen'rous and thoughtful, and he only wished you could have him innokilated for a gallopin' consumption, for his old friend as had lived here so long, wos dead, and he'd noweres to look for another."

"Poor fellow, poor fellow!" said Mr. Pickwick. "God bless you, my friends!"

As Mr. Pickwick uttered this adieu, the crowd raised a loud shout. Many among them were pressing forward to shake him by the hand, again, when he drew his arm through Perker's, and hurried from the prison: far more sad and melancholy, for the moment, than when he had first entered it. Alas! how many sad and unhappy beings had he left behind!

A happy evening was that, for, at least, one party in the George and Vulture; and light and cheerful were two of the hearts that emerged from its hospitable door next morning. The owners thereof were Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, the former of whom was speedily deposited inside a comfortable post coach, with a little dickey behind, in which the latter mounted with great agility.

"Sir," called out Mr. Weller to his master.

"Well, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, thrusting his head out of the window.

"I wish them horses had been three months and better in the Fleet, sir."

"Why, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Wy, sir," exclaimed Mr. Weller, rubbing his hands, "how they would go if they had been!"

CHAPTER XLVIII

RELATES HOW MR. PICKWICK, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF SAMUEL WELLER, ESSAYED TO SOFTEN THE HEART OF MR. BENJAMIN ALLEN, AND TO MOLLIFY THE WRATH OF MR. ROBERT SAWYER

MR. BEN ALLEN and Mr. Bob Sawyer sat together in the little surgery behind the shop, discussing minced veal and future prospects, when the discourse, not unnaturally, turned upon the practice acquired by Bob the aforesaid, and his present chances of deriving a competent independence from the honourable profession to which he had devoted himself.

"—Which, I think," observed Mr. Bob Sawyer, pursuing the thread of the subject, "which, I think, Ben, are rather dubious."

"What's rather dubious?" inquired Mr. Ben Allen, at the same time sharpening his intellects with a draught of beer. "What's dubious?"

"Why, the chances," responded Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"I forgot," said Mr. Ben Allen. "The beer has reminded me that I forgot, Bob—yes; they *are* dubious."

"It's wonderful how the poor people patronise me," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, reflectively. "They knock me up, at all hours of the night; they take medicine to an extent which I should have conceived impossible; they put on blisters and leeches with a perseverance worthy of a better cause; they make additions to their families, in a manner which is quite awful. Six of those last-named little promissory notes, all due on the same day, Ben, and all intrusted to me!"

"It's very gratifying, isn't it?" said Mr. Ben Allen, holding his plate for some more minced veal.

"Oh, very," replied Bob; "only not quite so much so, as the confidence of patients with a shilling or two to spare, would be. This business was capitally described in the

advertisement, Ben. It is a practice, a very extensive practice—and that's all."

"Bob," said Mr. Ben Allen, laying down his knife and fork, and fixing his eyes on the visage of his friend: "Bob, I'll tell you what it is."

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"You must make yourself, with as little delay as possible, master of Arabella's one thousand pounds."

"Three per cent. consolidated Bank annuities, now standing in her name in the book or books of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England," added Bob Sawyer, in legal phraseology.

"Exactly so," said Ben. "She has it when she comes of age, or marries. She wants a year of coming of age, and if you plucked up a spirit she needn't want a month of being married."

"She's a very charming and delightful creature," quoth Mr. Robert Sawyer, in reply; "and has only one fault that I know of, Ben. It happens, unfortunately, that that single blemish is a want of taste. She don't like me."

"It's my opinion that she don't know what she does like," said Mr. Ben Allen, contemptuously.

"Perhaps not," remarked Mr. Bob Sawyer. "But it's my opinion that she does know what she doesn't like, and that's of more importance."

"I wish," said Mr. Ben Allen, setting his teeth together, and speaking more like a savage warrior who fed on raw wolf's flesh which he carved with his fingers, than a peaceable young gentleman who ate minced veal with a knife and fork, "I wish I knew whether any rascal really has been tampering with her, and attempting to engage her affections. I think I should assassinate him, Bob."

"I'd put a bullet in him, if I found him out," said Mr. Sawyer, stopping in the course of a long draught of beer, and looking malignantly out of the porter pot. "If that didn't do his business, I'd extract it afterwards, and kill him that way."

Mr. Benjamin Allen gazed abstractedly on his friend for some minutes in silence, and then said:

"You have never proposed to her, point-blank, Bob?"

"No. Because I saw it would be of no use," replied Mr. Robert Sawyer.

"You shall do it, before you are twenty-four hours older,"

retorted Ben, with desperate calmness. "She *shall* have you, or I'll know the reason why. I'll exert my authority."

"Well," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, "we shall see."

"We *shall* see, my friend," replied Mr. Ben Allen, fiercely. He paused for a few seconds, and added in a voice broken by emotion, "You have loved her from a child, my friend. You loved her when we were boys at school together, and, even then, she was wayward, and slighted your young feelings. Do you recollect, with all the eagerness of a child's love, one day pressing upon her acceptance, two small caraway-seed biscuits and one sweet apple, neatly folded into a circular parcel with the leaf of a copybook?"

"I do," replied Bob Sawyer.

"She slighted that, I think?" said Ben Allen.

"She did," rejoined Bob. "She said I had kept the parcel so long in the pockets of my corduroys, that the apple was unpleasantly warm."

"I remember," said Mr. Allen, gloomily. "Upon which we ate it ourselves, in alternate bites."

Bob Sawyer intimated his recollection of the circumstance last alluded to, by a melancholy frown; and the two friends remained for some time absorbed, each in his own meditations.

While these observations were being exchanged between Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen; and while the boy in the grey livery, marvelling at the unwonted prolongation of the dinner, cast an anxious look, from time to time, towards the glass door, distracted by inward misgivings regarding the amount of minced veal which would be ultimately reserved for his individual cravings; there rolled soberly on through the streets of Bristol, a private fly, painted of a sad green colour, drawn by a chubby sort of brown horse, and driven by a surly-looking man with his legs dressed like the legs of a groom, and his body attired in the coat of a coachman. Such appearances are common to many vehicles belonging to, and maintained by, old ladies of economic habits; and in this vehicle, sat an old lady who was its mistress and proprietor.

"Martin!" said the old lady, calling to the surly man, out of the front window.

"Well?" said the surly man, touching his hat to the old lady.

"Mr. Sawyer's," said the old lady.

"I was going there," said the surly man.

The old lady nodded the satisfaction which this proof of the surly man's foresight imparted to her feelings; and the surly man giving a smart lash to the chubby horse, they all repaired to Mr. Bob Sawyer's together.

"Martin!" said the old lady, when the fly stopped at the door of Mr. Robert Sawyer, late Nockemorf.

"Well?" said Martin.

"Ask the lad to step out, and mind the horse."

"I'm going to mind the horse myself," said Martin, laying his whip on the roof of the fly.

"I can't permit it, on any account," said the old lady; "your testimony will be very important, and I must take you into the house with me. You must not stir from my side during the whole interview. Do you hear?"

"I hear," replied Martin.

"Well; what are you stopping for?"

"Nothing," replied Martin. So saying, the surly man leisurely descended from the wheel, on which he had been poising himself on the tops of the toes of his right foot, and having summoned the boy in the grey livery, opened the coach-door, flung down the steps, and thrusting in a hand enveloped in a dark wash-leather glove, pulled out the old lady with as much unconcern in his manner as if she were a bandbox.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the old lady. "I am so flurried, now I have got here, Martin, that I'm all in a tremble."

Mr. Martin coughed behind the dark wash-leather glove, but expressed no sympathy; so the old lady, composing herself, trotted up Mr. Bob Sawyer's steps, and Mr. Martin followed. Immediately on the old lady's entering the shop, Mr. Benjamin Allen and Mr. Bob Sawyer, who had been putting the spirits and water out of sight, and upsetting nauseous drugs to take off the smell of the tobacco-smoke, issued hastily forth in a transport of pleasure and affection.

"My dear aunt," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, "how kind of you to look in upon us! Mr. Sawyer, aunt; my friend Mr. Bob Sawyer whom I have spoken to you about, regarding—you know, aunt." And here Mr. Ben Allen, who was not at the moment extraordinarily sober, added the word "Arabella," in what was meant to be a whisper, but which was an especially audible and distinct tone of speech, which nobody could avoid hearing, if anybody were so disposed.

"My dear Benjamin," said the old lady, struggling with a great shortness of breath, and trembling from head to foot: "don't be alarmed, my dear, but I think I had better speak to Mr. Sawyer, alone, for a moment. Only for one moment."

"Bob," said Mr. Ben Allen, "will you take my aunt into the surgery?"

"Certainly," responded Bob, in a most professional voice. "Step this way, my dear ma'am. Don't be frightened, ma'am. We shall be able to set you to rights in a very short time, I have no doubt, ma'am. Here, my dear ma'am. Now then!" With this, Mr. Bob Sawyer having handed the old lady to a chair, shut the door, drew another chair close to her, and waited to hear detailed the symptoms of some disorder from which he saw in perspective a long train of profits and advantages.

The first thing the old lady did, was to shake her head a great many times, and begin to cry.

"Nervous," said Bob Sawyer complacently. "Camphor-julep and water three times a-day, and composing draught at night."

"I don't know how to begin, Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady. "It is so very painful and distressing."

"You need not begin, ma'am," rejoined Mr. Bob Sawyer. "I can anticipate all you would say. The head is in fault."

"I should be very sorry to think it was the heart," said the old lady, with a slight groan.

"Not the slightest danger of that, ma'am," replied Bob Sawyer. "The stomach is the primary cause."

"Mr. Sawyer!" exclaimed the old lady, starting.

"Not the least doubt of it, ma'am," rejoined Bob, looking wondrous wise. "Medicine, in time, my dear ma'am, would have prevented it all."

"Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady, more flurried than before, "this conduct is either great impertinence to one in my situation, sir, or it arises from your not understanding the object of my visit. If it had been in the power of medicine, or any foresight I could have used, to prevent what has occurred, I should certainly have done so. I had better see my nephew at once," said the old lady, twirling her reticule indignantly, and rising as she spoke.

"Stop a moment, ma'am," said Bob Sawyer; "I'm afraid I have not understood you. What is the matter, ma'am?"

"My niece, Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady; "your friend's sister."

"Yes, ma'am," said Bob, all impatience; for the old lady although much agitated, spoke with the most tantalising deliberation, as old ladies often do. "Yes, ma'am."

"Left my home, Mr. Sawyer, three days ago, on a pretended visit to my sister, another aunt of hers, who keeps the large boarding-school just beyond the third mile-stone where there is a very large laburnum tree and an oak gate," said the old lady, stopping in this place to dry her eyes.

"Oh, devil take the laburnum tree, ma'am!" said Bob, quite forgetting his professional dignity in his anxiety. "Get on a little faster; put a little more steam on, ma'am, pray."

"This morning," said the old lady, slowly, "this morning, she——"

"She came back, ma'am, I suppose," said Bob, with great animation. "Did she come back?"

"No, she did not; she wrote," replied the old lady.

"What did she say?" inquired Bob, eagerly.

"She said, Mr. Sawyer," replied the old lady—"and it is this. I want you to prepare Benjamin's mind for, gently and by degrees; she said that she was—I have got the letter in my pocket, Mr. Sawyer, but my glasses are in the carriage, and I should only waste your time if I attempted to point out the passage to you, without them; she said, in short, Mr. Sawyer, that she was married."

"What!" said, or rather shouted, Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"Married," repeated the old lady.

Mr. Bob Sawyer stopped to hear no more; but darting from the surgery into the outer shop, cried in a stentorian voice, "Ben, my boy, she's bolted!"

Mr. Ben Allen, who had been slumbering behind the counter, with his head half a foot or so below his knees, no sooner heard this appalling communication, than he made a precipitate rush at Mr. Martin, and, twisting his hand in the neckcloth of that taciturn servitor, expressed an intention of choking him where he stood. This intention, with a promptitude often the effect of desperation, he at once commenced carrying into execution, with much vigour and surgical skill.

Mr. Martin, who was a man of few words and possessed but little power of eloquence or persuasion, submitted to this operation with a very calm and agreeable expression of

countenance, for some seconds; finding, however, that it threatened speedily to lead to a result which would place it beyond his power to claim any wages, board or otherwise, in all time to come, he muttered an inarticulate remonstrance and felled Mr. Benjamin Allen to the ground. As that gentleman had his hands entangled in his cravat, he had no alternative but to follow him to the floor. There they both lay struggling, when the shop door opened, and the party was increased by the arrival of two most unexpected visitors: to wit, Mr. Pickwick, and Mr. Samuel Weller.

The impression at once produced on Mr. Weller's mind by what he saw, was, that Mr. Martin was hired by the establishment of Sawyer late Nockemorf, to take strong medicine, or to go into fits and be experimentalised upon, or to swallow poison now and then with the view of testing the efficacy of some new antidotes, or to do something or other to promote the great science of medicine, and gratify the ardent spirit of inquiry burning in the bosoms of its two young professors. So, without presuming to interfere, Sam stood perfectly still, and looked on, as if he were mightily interested in the result of the then pending experiment. Not so, Mr. Pickwick. He at once threw himself on the astonished combatants, with his accustomed energy, and loudly called upon the by-standers to interpose.

This roused Mr. Bob Sawyer, who had been hitherto quite paralysed by the frenzy of his companion. With that gentleman's assistance, Mr. Pickwick raised Ben Allen to his feet. Mr. Martin finding himself alone on the floor, got up, and looked about him.

"Mr. Allen," said Mr. Pickwick, "what is the matter, sir?"

"Never mind, sir!" replied Mr. Allen, with haughty defiance.

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Bob Sawyer. "Is he unwell?"

Before Bob could reply, Mr. Ben Allen seized Mr. Pickwick by the hand, and murmured, in sorrowful accents, "My sister, my dear sir; my sister."

"Oh, is that all!" said Mr. Pickwick. "We shall easily arrange that matter, I hope. Your sister is safe and well, and I am here, my dear sir, to——"

"Sorry to do anythin' as may cause an interruption to such wery pleasant proceedin's, as the king said wen he

dissolved the parliament," interposed Mr. Weller, who had been peeping through the glass door; "but there's another experiment here, sir. Here's a venerable old lady a lyin' on the carpet waitin' for dissection, or galwinism, or some other rewivin' and scientific inwention."

"I forgot," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen. "It is my aunt."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pickwick. "Poor lady! Gently, Sam, gently."

"Strange sitivation for one o' the family," observed Sam Weller, hoisting the aunt into a chair. "Now, depitty Sawbones, bring out the woll-tilly!"

The latter observation was addressed to the boy in grey, who, having handed over the fly to the care of the street-keeper, had come back to see what all the noise was about. Between the boy in grey, and Mr. Bob Sawyer, and Mr. Benjamin Allen (who having frightened his aunt into a fainting fit, was affectionately solicitous for her recovery) the old lady was, at length, restored to consciousness; then Mr. Ben Allen, turning with a puzzled countenance to Mr. Pickwick, asked him what he was about to say, when he had been so alarmingly interrupted.

"We are all friends here, I presume?" said Mr. Pickwick, clearing his voice, and looking towards the man of few words with the surly countenance, who drove the fly with the chubby horse.

This reminded Mr. Bob Sawyer that the boy in grey was looking on, with eyes wide open, and greedy ears. The incipient chemist having been lifted up by his coat collar, and dropped outside the door, Bob Sawyer assured Mr. Pickwick that he might speak without reserve.

"Your sister, my dear sir," said Mr. Pickwick, turning to Benjamin Allen, "is in London; well and happy."

"Her happiness is no object to me, sir," said Mr. Benjamin Allen, with a flourish of the hand.

"Her husband is an object to *me*, sir," said Bob Sawyer. "He shall be an object to me, sir, at twelve paces, and a very pretty object I'll make of him, sir—a mean-spirited scoundrel!" This, as it stood, was a very pretty denunciation, and magnanimous withal; but Mr. Bob Sawyer rather weakened its effect, by winding up with some general observations concerning the punching of heads and knocking out of eyes, which were commonplace by comparison.

"Stay, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; "before you apply those

epithets to the gentleman in question, consider, dispassionately, the extent of his fault, and above all remember that he is a friend of mine."

"What!" said Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"His name!" cried Ben Allen. "His name!"

"Mr. Nathaniel Winkle," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Benjamin Allen deliberately crushed his spectacles beneath the heel of his boot, and having picked up the pieces, and put them into three separate pockets, folded his arms, bit his lips, and looked in a threatening manner at the bland features of Mr. Pickwick.

"Then it's you, is it, sir, who have encouraged and brought about this match?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen at length.

"And it's this gentleman's servant, I suppose," interrupted the old lady, "who has been skulking about my house, and endeavouring to entrap my servants to conspire against their mistress. Martin!"

"Well?" said the surly man, coming forward.

"Is that the young man you saw in the lane, whom you told me about, this morning?"

Mr. Martin, who, as it has already appeared, was a man of few words, looked at Sam Weller, nodded his head, and growled forth, "That's the man!" Mr. Weller, who was never proud, gave a smile of friendly recognition as his eyes encountered those of the surly groom, and admitted, in courteous terms, that he had "known him afore."

"And this is the faithful creature," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, "whom I had nearly suffocated! Mr. Pickwick, how dare you allow your fellow to be employed in the abduction of my sister? I demand that you explain this matter, sir."

"Explain it, sir!" cried Bob Sawyer, fiercely.

"It's a conspiracy," said Ben Allen.

"A regular plant," added Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"A disgraceful imposition," observed the old lady.

"Nothing but a do," remarked Martin.

"Pray hear me," urged Mr. Pickwick, as Mr. Ben Allen fell into a chair that patients were bled in, and gave way to his pocket-handkerchief. "I have rendered no assistance in this matter, beyond that of being present at one interview between the young people, which I could not prevent, and from which I conceived my presence would remove any slight colouring of impropriety that it might otherwise have had ;

this is the whole share I have taken in the transaction, and I had no suspicion that an immediate marriage was even contemplated. Though, mind," added Mr. Pickwick, hastily checking himself, "mind, I do not say I should have prevented it, if I *had* known that it was intended."

"You hear that, all of you; you hear that?" said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"I hope they do," mildly observed Mr. Pickwick, looking round, "and," added that gentleman: his colour mounting as he spoke: "I hope they hear this, sir, also. That from what has been stated to me, sir, I assert that you were by no means justified in attempting to force your sister's inclinations as you did, and that you should rather have endeavoured by your kindness and forbearance to have supplied the place of other nearer relations whom she has never known, from a child. As regards my young friend, I must beg to add, that in every point of worldly advantage, he is, at least, on an equal footing with yourself, if not on a much better one, and that unless I hear this question discussed with becoming temper and moderation, I decline hearing any more said upon the subject."

"I wish to make a very few remarks in addition to wot has been put forard by the honorable gen'l'm'n as has jist give over," said Mr. Weller, stepping forth, "wich is this here: a individual in company has called me a feller."

"That has nothing whatever to do with the matter, Sam," interposed Mr. Pickwick. "Pray hold your tongue."

"I ain't a goin' to say nothin' on that 'ere pint, sir," replied Sam, "but merely this here. P'raps that gen'l'm'n may think as there wos a priory 'tachment; but there worn't nothin' o' the sort, for the young lady said, in the very beginnin' o' the keepin' company, that she couldn't abide him. Nobody's cut him out, and it 'ud ha' been jist the very same for him if the young lady had never seen Mr. Vinkle. That's wot I wished to say, sir, and I hope I've now made that 'ere gen'l'm'n's mind easy."

A short pause followed these consolatory remarks of Mr. Weller. Then Mr. Ben Allen rising from his chair, protested that he would never see Arabella's face again: while Mr. Bob Sawyer, despite Sam's flattering assurance, vowed dreadful vengeance on the happy bridegroom.

But, just when matters were at their height, and threatening to remain so, Mr. Pickwick found a powerful assistant

in the old lady, who, evidently much struck by the mode in which he had advocated her niece's cause, ventured to approach Mr. Benjamin Allen with a few comforting reflections, of which the chief were, that after all, perhaps, it was well it was no worse; the least said the soonest mended, and upon her word she did not know that it was so very bad after all; what was over couldn't be begun, and what couldn't be cured must be endured: with various other assurances of the like novel and strengthening description. To all of these, Mr. Benjamin Allen replied that he meant no disrespect to his aunt, or anybody there, but if it were all the same to them, and they would allow him to have his own way, he would rather have the pleasure of hating his sister till death, and after it.

At length, when this determination had been announced half a hundred times, the old lady suddenly bridling up and looking very majestic, wished to know what she had done that no respect was to be paid to her years or station, and that she should be obliged to beg and pray, in that way, of her own nephew, whom she remembered about five-and-twenty years before he was born, and whom she had known, personally, when he hadn't a tooth in his head? To say nothing of her presence on the first occasion of his having his hair cut, and assistance at numerous other times and ceremonies during his babyhood, of sufficient importance to found a claim upon his affection, obedience, and sympathies, for ever.

While the good lady was bestowing this objurgation on Mr. Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer and Mr. Pickwick had retired in close conversation to the inner room, where Mr. Sawyer was observed to apply himself several times to the mouth of a black bottle, under the influence of which, his features gradually assumed a cheerful and even jovial expression. And at last he emerged from the room, bottle in hand, and, remarking that he was very sorry to say he had been making a fool of himself, begged to propose the health and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Winkle, whose felicity, so far from envying, he would be the first to congratulate them upon. Hearing this, Mr. Ben Allen suddenly arose from his chair, and, seizing the black bottle, drank the toast so heartily, that, the liquor being strong, he became nearly as black in the face as the bottle. Finally, the black bottle went round till it was empty, and there was so much shaking of hands and

interchanging of compliments, that even the metal-visaged Mr. Martin condescended to smile.

"And now," said Bob Sawyer, rubbing his hands, "we'll have a jolly night."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Pickwick, "that I must return to my inn. I have not been accustomed to fatigue lately, and my journey has tired me exceedingly."

"You'll take some tea, Mr. Pickwick?" said the old lady, with irresistible sweetness.

"Thank you, I would rather not," replied that gentleman. The truth is, that the old lady's evidently increasing admiration, was Mr. Pickwick's principal inducement for going away. He thought of Mrs. Bardell; and every glance of the old lady's eyes threw him into a cold perspiration.

As Mr. Pickwick could by no means be prevailed upon to stay, it was arranged at once, on his own proposition, that Mr. Benjamin Allen should accompany him on his journey to the elder Mr. Winkle's, and that the coach should be at the door, at nine o'clock next morning. He then took his leave, and, followed by Samuel Weller, repaired to the Bush. It is worthy of remark, that Mr. Martin's face was horribly convulsed as he shook hands with Sam at parting, and that he gave vent to a smile and an oath simultaneously: from which tokens it has been inferred by those who were best acquainted with that gentleman's peculiarities, that he expressed himself much pleased with Mr. Weller's society, and requested the honour of his further acquaintance.

CHAPTER L

HOW MR. PICKWICK SPED UPON HIS MISSION, AND HOW
HE WAS REINFORCED IN THE OUTSET BY A MOST
UNEXPECTED AUXILIARY

THE horses were put to, punctually at a quarter before nine next morning, and Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller having each taken his seat, the one inside and the other out, the postillion was duly directed to repair in the first instance to Mr. Bob Sawyer's house, for the purpose of taking up Mr. Benjamin Allen.

It was with feelings of no small astonishment, when the carriage drew up before the door with the red lamp, and the very legible inscription of "Sawyer, late Nockemorf," that Mr. Pickwick saw, on popping his head out of the coach-window, the boy in the grey livery very busily employed in putting up the shutters: the which, being an unusual and an un-business-like proceeding at that hour of the morning, at once suggested to his mind, two inferences; the one, that some good friend and patient of Mr. Bob Sawyer's was dead; the other, that Mr. Bob Sawyer himself was bankrupt.

"What is the matter?" said Mr. Pickwick to the boy.

"Nothing's the matter, sir," replied the boy, expanding his mouth to the whole breadth of his countenance.

"All right, all right!" cried Bob Sawyer suddenly appearing at the door, with a small leathern knapsack, limp and dirty, in one hand, and a rough coat and shawl thrown over the other arm. "I'm going, old fellow."

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," replied Bob Sawyer, "and a regular expedition we'll make of it. Here, Sam! Look out!" Thus briefly bespeaking Mr. Weller's attention, Mr. Bob Sawyer jerked the leathern knapsack into the dickey, where it was imme-

diately stowed away, under the seat, by Sam, who regarded the proceeding with great admiration. This done, Mr. Bob Sawyer, with the assistance of the boy, forcibly worked himself into the rough coat, which was a few sizes too small for him, and then advancing to the coach-window, thrust in his head, and laughed boisterously.

"What a start it is, isn't it!" cried Bob, wiping the tears out of his eyes, with one of the cuffs of the rough coat.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Pickwick, with some embarrassment, "I had no idea of your accompanying us."

"No, that's just the very thing," replied Bob, seizing Mr. Pickwick by the lappel of his coat. "That's the joke."

"Oh, that's the joke?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Of course," replied Bob. "It's the whole point of the thing, you know—that, and leaving the business to take care of itself, as it seems to have made up its mind not to take care of me." With this explanation of the phenomenon of the shutters, Mr. Bob Sawyer pointed to the shop, and relapsed into an ecstasy of mirth.

"Bless me, you are surely not mad enough to think of leaving your patients without anybody to attend them!" remonstrated Mr. Pickwick in a very serious tone.

"Why not?" asked Bob, in reply. "I shall save by it, you know. None of them ever pay. Besides," said Bob, lowering his voice to a confidential whisper, "they will be all the better for it; for, being nearly out of drugs, and not able to increase my account just now, I should have been obliged to give them calomel all round, and it would have been certain to have disagreed with some of them. So it's all for the best."

There was a philosophy, and a strength of reasoning, about this reply, which Mr. Pickwick was not prepared for. He paused a few moments, and added, less firmly than before:

"But this chaise, my young friend, will only hold two; and I am pledged to Mr. Allen."

"Don't think of me for a minute," replied Bob. "I've arranged it all; Sam and I will share the dickey between us. Look here. This little bill is to be wafered on the shop door: 'Sawyer, late Nockemorf. Enquire of Mrs. Cripps over the way.' Mrs. Cripps is my boy's mother. 'Mr. Sawyer's very sorry,' says Mrs. Cripps, 'couldn't help it—fetched away early this morning to a consultation of the very first surgeons in the country—couldn't do without him

—would have him at any price—tremendous operation. The fact is,” said Bob in conclusion, “it’ll do me more good than otherwise, I expect. If it gets into one of the local papers, it will be the making of me. Here’s Ben ; now then, jump in !”

With these hurried words, Mr. Bob Sawyer pushed the postboy on one side, jerked his friend into the vehicle, slammed the door, put up the steps, wafered the bill on the street door, locked it, put the key in his pocket, jumped into the dickey, gave the word for starting, and did the whole with such extraordinary precipitation, that before Mr. Pickwick had well begun to consider whether Mr. Bob Sawyer ought to go or not, they were rolling away, with Mr. Bob Sawyer thoroughly established as part and parcel of the equipage.

So long as their progress was confined to the streets of Bristol, the facetious Bob kept his professional green spectacles on, and conducted himself with becoming steadiness and gravity of demeanour ; merely giving utterance to divers verbal witticisms for the exclusive behoof and entertainment of Mr. Samuel Weller. But when they emerged on the open road, he threw off his green spectacles and his gravity together, and performed a great variety of practical jokes, which were calculated to attract the attention of the passers-by, and to render the carriage and those it contained, objects of more than ordinary curiosity ; the least conspicuous among these feats, being, a most vociferous imitation of a key-bugle, and the ostentatious display of a crimson silk pocket-handkerchief attached to a walking-stick, which was occasionally waved in the air with various gestures indicative of supremacy and defiance.

“I wonder,” said Mr. Pickwick, stopping in the midst of a most sedate conversation with Ben Allen, bearing reference to the numerous good qualities of Mr. Winkle and his sister : “I wonder what all the people we pass, can see in us to make them stare so.”

“It’s a neat turn-out,” replied Ben Allen, with something of pride in his tone. “They’re not used to see this sort of thing, every day, I dare say.”

“Possibly,” replied Mr. Pickwick. “It may be so. Perhaps it is.”

Mr. Pickwick might very probably have reasoned himself into the belief that it really was : had he not, just then

happening to look out of the coach window, observed that the looks of the passengers betokened anything but respectful astonishment, and that various telegraphic communications appeared to be passing between them and some persons outside the vehicle: whereupon it occurred to him that these demonstrations might be, in some remote degree, referable to the humorous deportment of Mr. Robert Sawyer.

"I hope," said Mr. Pickwick, "that our volatile friend is committing no absurdities in that dickey behind."

"Oh dear, no," replied Ben Allen. "Except when he's elevated, Bob's the quietest creature breathing."

Here a prolonged imitation of a key-bugle broke upon the ear, succeeded by cheers and screams, all of which evidently proceeded from the throat and lungs of the quietest creature breathing, or in plainer designation, of Mr. Bob Sawyer himself.

Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Ben Allen looked expressively at each other, and the former gentleman taking off his hat, and leaning out of the coach-window until nearly the whole of his waistcoat was outside it, was at length enabled to catch a glimpse of his facetious friend.

Mr. Bob Sawyer was seated: not in the dickey, but on the roof of the chaise, with his legs as far asunder as they would conveniently go, wearing Mr. Samuel Weller's hat on one side of his head, and bearing, in one hand, a most enormous sandwich, while, in the other, he supported a goodly-sized case bottle, to both of which he applied himself with intense relish: varying the monotony of the occupation by an occasional howl, or the interchange of some lively *badinage* with any passing stranger. The crimson flag was carefully tied in an erect position to the rail of the dickey; and Mr. Samuel Weller, decorated with Bob Sawyer's hat, was seated in the centre thereof, discussing a twin sandwich, with an animated countenance, the expression of which betokened his entire and perfect approval of the whole arrangement.

This was enough to irritate a gentleman with Mr. Pickwick's sense of propriety, but it was not the whole extent of the aggravation, for a stage-coach full, inside and out, was meeting them at the moment, and the astonishment of the passengers was very palpably evinced. The congratulations of an Irish family, too, who were keeping up with the chaise, and begging all the time, were of rather a boisterous descrip-

tion ; especially those of its male head, who appeared to consider the display as part and parcel of some political, or other procession of triumph.

"Mr. Sawyer!" cried Mr. Pickwick, in a state of great excitement. "Mr. Sawyer, sir!"

"Hallo!" responded that gentleman, looking over the side of the chaise with all the coolness in life.

"Are you mad, sir?" demanded Mr. Pickwick.

"Not a bit of it," replied Bob; "only cheerful."

"Cheerful, sir!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick. "Take down that scandalous red handkerchief, I beg. I insist, sir. Sam, take it down."

Before Sam could interpose, Mr. Bob Sawyer gracefully struck his colours, and having put them in his pocket, nodded in a courteous manner to Mr. Pickwick, wiped the mouth of the case-bottle, and applied it to his own; thereby informing him, without any unnecessary waste of words, that he devoted that draught to wishing him all manner of happiness and prosperity. Having done this, Bob replaced the cork with great care, and looking benignantly down on Mr. Pickwick, took a large bite out of the sandwich, and smiled.

"Come," said Mr. Pickwick, whose momentary anger was not quite proof against Bob's immovable self-possession, "pray let us have no more of this absurdity."

"No, no," replied Bob, once more exchanging hats with Mr. Weller; "I didn't mean to do it, only I got so enlivened with the ride that I couldn't help it."

"Think of the look of the thing," expostulated Mr. Pickwick; "have some regard to appearances."

"Oh, certainly," said Bob, "it's not the sort of thing at all. All over, governor."

Satisfied with this assurance, Mr. Pickwick once more drew his head into the chaise and pulled up the glass; but he had scarcely resumed the conversation which Mr. Bob Sawyer had interrupted, when he was somewhat startled by the apparition of a small dark body, of an oblong form, on the outside of the window, which gave sundry taps against it, as if impatient of admission.

"What's this?" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"It looks like a case-bottle;" remarked Ben Allen, eyeing the object in question through his spectacles with some interest; "I rather think it belongs to Bob."



MR. BOB SAWYER'S MODE OF TRAVELLING

The impression was perfectly accurate; for Mr. Bob Sawyer having attached the case-bottle to the end of the walking-stick, was battering the window with it, in token of his wish that his friends inside would partake of its contents, in all good fellowship and harmony.

"What's to be done?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking at the bottle. "This proceeding is more absurd than the other."

"I think it would be best to take it in," replied Mr. Ben Allen; "it would serve him right to take it in and keep it, wouldn't it?"

"It would," said Mr. Pickwick: "shall I?"

"I think it the most proper course we could possibly adopt," replied Ben.

This advice quite coinciding with his own opinion, Mr. Pickwick gently let down the window and disengaged the bottle from the stick: upon which the latter was drawn up, and Mr. Bob Sawyer was heard to laugh heartily.

"What a merry dog it is!" said Mr. Pickwick, looking round at his companion with the bottle in his hand.

"He is," said Mr. Allen.

"You cannot possibly be angry with him," remarked Mr. Pickwick.

"Quite out of the question," observed Benjamin Allen.

During this short interchange of sentiments, Mr. Pickwick had, in an abstracted mood, uncorked the bottle.

"What is it?" inquired Ben Allen, carelessly.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick, with equal carelessness. "It smells, I think, like milk-punch."

"Oh, indeed!" said Ben.

"I *think* so," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, very properly guarding himself against the possibility of stating an untruth: "mind, I could not undertake to say certainly, without tasting it."

"You had better do so," said Ben; "we may as well know what it is."

"Do you think so?" replied Mr. Pickwick. "Well; if you are curious to know, of course I have no objection."

Ever willing to sacrifice his own feelings to the wishes of his friend, Mr. Pickwick at once took a pretty long taste.

"What is it?" inquired Ben Allen, interrupting him with some impatience.

"Curious," said Mr. Pickwick, smacking his lips. "I hardly know, now. Oh, yes!" said Mr. Pickwick, after a second taste. "It is punch."

Mr. Ben Allen looked at Mr. Pickwick; Mr. Pickwick looked at Mr. Ben Allen; Mr. Ben Allen smiled; Mr. Pickwick did not.

"It would serve him right," said the last-named gentleman, with some severity, "it would serve him right to drink it every drop."

"The very thing that occurred to me," said Ben Allen.

"Is it indeed?" rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "Then here's his health!" With these words, that excellent person took a most energetic pull at the bottle, and handed it to Ben Allen, who was not slow to imitate his example. The smiles became mutual, and the milk-punch was gradually and cheerfully disposed of.

"After all," said Mr. Pickwick, as he drained the last drop, "his pranks are really very amusing; very entertaining indeed."

"You may say that," rejoined Mr. Ben Allen. In proof of Bob Sawyer's being one of the funniest fellows alive, he proceeded to entertain Mr. Pickwick with a long and circumstantial account how that gentleman once drank himself into a fever and got his head shaved; the relation of which pleasant and agreeable history was only stopped by the stoppage of the chaise at the Bell at Berkeley Heath, to change horses.

"I say! We're going to dine here, aren't we?" said Bob, looking in at the window.

"Dine!" said Mr. Pickwick. "Why, we have only come nineteen miles, and have eighty-seven and a half to go."

"Just the reason why we should take something to enable us to bear up against the fatigue," remonstrated Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"Oh, it's quite impossible to dine at half-past eleven o'clock in the day," replied Mr. Pickwick, looking at his watch.

"So it is," rejoined Bob, "lunch is the very thing. Hallo, you sir! Lunch for three, directly, and keep the horses back for a quarter of an hour. Tell them to put everything they have cold, on the table, and some bottled ale, and let us taste your very best Madeira." Issuing these orders with monstrous importance and bustle, Mr. Bob Sawyer at once

hurried into the house to superintend the arrangements; in less than five minutes he returned and declared them to be excellent.

The quality of the lunch fully justified the eulogium which Bob had pronounced, and very great justice was done to it, not only by that gentleman, but Mr. Ben Allen and Mr. Pickwick also. Under the auspices of the three, the bottled ale and the Madeira were promptly disposed of; and when (the horses being once more put to) they resumed their seats, with the case-bottle full of the best substitute for milk-punch that could be procured on so short a notice, the key-bugle sounded, and the red flag waved, without the slightest opposition on Mr. Pickwick's part.

At the Hop Pole at Tewkesbury, they stopped to dine; upon which occasion there was more bottled ale, with some more Madeira, and some Port besides; and here the case-bottle was replenished for the fourth time. Under the influence of these combined stimulants, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Ben Allen fell fast asleep for thirty miles, while Bob and Mr. Weller sang duets in the dickey.

It was quite dark when Mr. Pickwick roused himself sufficiently to look out of window. The straggling cottages by the road-side, the dingy hue of every object visible, the murky atmosphere, the paths of cinders and brick-dust, the deep-red glow of furnace fires in the distance, the volumes of dense smoke issuing heavily forth from high toppling chimneys, blackening and obscuring everything around; the glare of distant lights, the ponderous waggons which toiled along the road, laden with clashing rods of iron, or piled with heavy goods—all betokened their rapid approach to the great working town of Birmingham.

As they rattled through the narrow thoroughfares leading to the heart of the turmoil, the sights and sounds of earnest occupation struck more forcibly on the senses. The streets were thronged with working-people. The hum of labour resounded from every house, lights gleamed from the long casement windows in the attic stories, and the whirl of wheels and noise of machinery shook the trembling walls. The fires, whose lurid sullen light had been visible for miles, blazed fiercely up, in the great works and factories of the town. The din of hammers, the rushing of steam, and the dead heavy clanking of engines, was the harsh music which arose from every quarter.

The postboy was driving briskly through the open streets, and past the handsome and well-lighted shops which intervene between the outskirts of the town and the Old Royal Hotel, before Mr. Pickwick had begun to consider the very difficult and delicate nature of the commission which had carried him thither.

The delicate nature of this commission, and the difficulty of executing it in a satisfactory manner, were by no means lessened by the voluntary companionship of Mr. Bob Sawyer. Truth to tell, Mr. Pickwick felt that his presence on the occasion, however considerate and gratifying, was by no means an honour he would willingly have sought; in fact, he would cheerfully have given a reasonable sum of money to have had Mr. Bob Sawyer removed to any place at not less than fifty miles' distance, without delay.

Mr. Pickwick had never held any personal communication with Mr. Winkle, senior, although he had once or twice corresponded with him by letter, and returned satisfactory answers to his inquiries concerning the moral character and behaviour of his son; he felt nervously sensible that to wait upon him, for the first time, attended by Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen, both slightly fuddled, was not the most ingenious and likely means that could have been hit upon to prepossess him in his favour.

"However," said Mr. Pickwick, endeavouring to re-assure himself, "I must do the best I can. I must see him to-night, for I faithfully promised to do so. If they persist in accompanying me, I must make the interview as brief as possible, and be content to hope that, for their own sakes, they will not expose themselves."

As he comforted himself with these reflections, the chaise stopped at the door of the Old Royal. Ben Allen having been partially awakened from a stupendous sleep, and dragged out by the collar by Mr. Samuel Weller, Mr. Pickwick was enabled to alight. They were shown to a comfortable apartment, and Mr. Pickwick at once propounded a question to the waiter concerning the whereabouts of Mr. Winkle's residence.

"Close by, sir," said the waiter, "not above five hundred yards, sir. Mr. Winkle is a wharfinger, sir, at the canal, sir. Private residence is not—oh dear no, sir, *not* five hundred yards, sir." Here the waiter blew a candle out, and made a feint of lighting it again, in order to afford

Mr. Pickwick an opportunity of asking any further questions, if he felt so disposed.

"Take anything now, sir?" said the waiter, lighting the candle in desperation at Mr. Pickwick's silence. "Tea or coffee, sir? Dinner, sir?"

"Nothing now."

"Very good, sir. Like to order supper, sir?"

"Not just now."

"*Very* good, sir." Here, he walked softly to the door, and then stopping short, turned round, and said, with great suavity :

"Shall I send the chambermaid, gentlemen?"

"You may if you please;" replied Mr. Pickwick.

"If *you* please, sir."

"And bring some soda water," said Bob Sawyer.

"Soda water, sir? Yes, sir." With his mind apparently relieved from an overwhelming weight, by having at last got an order for something, the waiter imperceptibly melted away. Waiters never walk or run. They have a peculiar and mysterious power of skimming out of rooms, which other mortals possess not.

Some slight symptoms of vitality having been awakened in Mr. Ben Allen by the soda water, he suffered himself to be prevailed upon to wash his face and hands, and to submit to be brushed by Sam. Mr. Pickwick and Bob Sawyer having also repaired the disorder which the journey had made in their apparel, the three started forth, arm in arm, to Mr. Winkle's; Bob Sawyer impregnating the atmosphere with tobacco smoke as he walked along.

About a quarter of a mile off, in a quiet, substantial-looking street, stood an old red-brick house with three steps before the door, and a brass plate upon it, bearing, in fat Roman capitals, the words, "Mr. Winkle." The steps were very white, and the bricks were very red, and the house was very clean; and here stood Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Benjamin Allen, and Mr. Bob Sawyer, as the clock struck ten.

A smart servant girl answered the knock, and started on beholding the three strangers.

"Is Mr. Winkle at home, my dear?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He is just going to supper, sir," replied the girl.

"Give him that card if you please," rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

"Say I am sorry to trouble him at so late an hour; but I am anxious to see him to-night, and have only just arrived."

The girl looked timidly at Mr. Bob Sawyer, who was expressing his admiration of her personal charms by a variety of wonderful grimaces; and casting an eye at the hats and great coats which hung in the passage, called another girl to mind the door while she went up stairs. The sentinel was speedily relieved; for the girl returned immediately, and begging pardon of the gentlemen for leaving them in the street, ushered them into a floor-clothed back parlour, half office and half dressing-room, in which the principal useful and ornamental articles of furniture, were a desk, a wash-hand stand and shaving glass, a boot-rack and boot-jack, a high stool, four chairs, a table, and an old eight-day clock. Over the mantel-piece were the sunken doors of an iron safe, while a couple of hanging shelves for books, an almanack, and several files of dusty papers, decorated the walls.

"Very sorry to leave you standing at the door, sir," said the girl, lighting a lamp, and addressing Mr. Pickwick with a winning smile, "but you was quite strangers to me; and we have such a many trampers that only come to see what they can lay their hands on, that really—"

"There is not the least occasion for any apology, my dear," said Mr. Pickwick good humouredly.

"Not the slightest, my love," said Bob Sawyer, playfully stretching forth his arms, and skipping from side to side, as if to prevent the young lady's leaving the room.

The young lady was not at all softened by these allurements, for she at once expressed her opinion that Mr. Bob Sawyer was an "odous creetur;" and, on his becoming rather more pressing in his attentions, imprinted her fair fingers upon his face, and bounced out of the room with many expressions of aversion and contempt.

Deprived of the young lady's society, Mr. Bob Sawyer proceeded to divert himself by peeping into the desk, looking into all the table-drawers, feigning to pick the lock of the iron safe, turning the almanack with its face to the wall, trying on the boots of Mr. Winkle, senior, over his own, and making several other humorous experiments upon the furniture, all of which afforded Mr. Pickwick unspeakable horror and agony, and yielded Mr. Bob Sawyer proportionate delight.

At length the door opened, and a little old gentleman in a snuff-coloured suit, with a head and face the precise counterpart of those belonging to Mr. Winkle, junior.

excepting that he was rather bald, trotted into the room with Mr. Pickwick's card in one hand, and a silver candlestick in the other.

"Mr. Pickwick, sir, how do you do?" said Winkle the elder, putting down the candlestick and proffering his hand. "Hope I see you well, sir. Glad to see you. Be seated, Mr. Pickwick, I beg, sir. This gentleman is—"

"My friend, Mr. Sawyer," interposed Mr. Pickwick, "your son's friend."

"Oh," said Mr. Winkle the elder, looking rather grimly at Bob. "I hope *you* are well, sir."

"Right as a trivet, sir," replied Bob Sawyer.

"This other gentleman," cried Mr. Pickwick, "is, as you will see, when you have read the letter with which I am entrusted, a very near relative, or I should rather say a very particular friend of your son's. His name is Allen."

"*That* gentleman?" inquired Mr. Winkle, pointing with the card towards Ben Allen, who had fallen asleep in an attitude which left nothing of him visible but his spine and his coat collar.

Mr. Pickwick was on the point of replying to the question, and reciting Mr. Benjamin Allen's name and honourable distinctions at full length, when the sprightly Mr. Bob Sawyer, with a view of rousing his friend to a sense of his situation, inflicted a startling pinch upon the fleshy part of his arm, which caused him to jump up with a shriek. Suddenly aware that he was in the presence of a stranger, Mr. Ben Allen advanced, and, shaking Mr. Winkle most affectionately by both hands for about five minutes, murmured, in some half-intelligible fragments of sentences, the great delight he felt in seeing him, and a hospitable inquiry whether he felt disposed to take anything after his walk, or would prefer waiting "till dinner-time;" which done, he sat down and gazed about him with a petrified stare, as if he had not the remotest idea where he was, which indeed he had not.

All this was most embarrassing to Mr. Pickwick, the more especially as Mr. Winkle, senior, evinced palpable astonishment at the eccentric—not to say extraordinary—behaviour of his two companions. To bring the matter to an issue at once, he drew a letter from his pocket, and presenting it to Mr. Winkle, senior, said:

"This letter, sir, is from your son. You will see, by its

contents, that on your favourable and fatherly consideration of it, depend his future happiness and welfare. Will you oblige me by giving it the calmest and coolest perusal, and by discussing the subject afterwards, with me, in the tone and spirit in which alone it ought to be discussed? You may judge of the importance of your decision to your son, and his intense anxiety upon the subject, by my waiting upon you, without any previous warning, at so late an hour; and," added Mr. Pickwick, glancing slightly at his two companions, "and under such unfavourable circumstances."

With this prelude, Mr. Pickwick placed four closely written sides of extra superfine wire-wove penitence in the hands of the astounded Mr. Winkle, senior. Then reseating himself in his chair, he watched his looks and manner: anxiously, it is true, but with the open front of a gentleman who feels he has taken no part which he need excuse or palliate.

The old wharfinger turned the letter over; looked at the front, back, and sides; made a microscopic examination of the fat little boy on the seal; raised his eyes to Mr. Pickwick's face; and then, seating himself on the high stool, and drawing the lamp closer to him, broke the wax, unfolded the epistle, and lifting it to the light, prepared to read.

Just at this moment, Mr. Bob Sawyer, whose wit had lain dormant for some minutes, placed his hands upon his knees, and made a face after the portraits of the late Mr. Grimaldi, as clown. It so happened that Mr. Winkle, senior, instead of being deeply engaged in reading the letter, as Mr. Bob Sawyer thought, chanced to be looking over the top of it at no less a person than Mr. Bob Sawyer himself; rightly conjecturing that the face aforesaid was made in ridicule and derision of his own person, he fixed his eyes on Bob with such expressive sternness, that the late Mr. Grimaldi's lineaments gradually resolved themselves into a very fine expression of humility and confusion.

"Did you speak, sir?" inquired Mr. Winkle, senior, after an awful silence.

"No, sir," replied Bob, with no remains of the clown about him, save and except the extreme redness of his cheeks.

"You are sure you did not, sir?" said Mr. Winkle, senior.

"Oh dear, yes, sir, quite," replied Bob.

"I thought you did, sir," rejoined the old gentleman, with indignant emphasis. "Perhaps you *looked* at me, sir?"

"Oh, no! sir, not at all," replied Bob, with extreme civility.

"I am very glad to hear it, sir," said Mr. Winkle, senior. Having frowned upon the abashed Bob with great magnificence, the old gentleman again brought the letter to the light, and began to read it seriously.

Mr. Pickwick eyed him intently as he turned from the bottom line of the first page to the top line of the second, and from the bottom of the second to the top of the third, and from the bottom of the third to the top of the fourth; but not the slightest alteration of countenance afforded a clue to the feelings with which he received the announcement of his son's marriage, which Mr. Pickwick knew was in the very first half-dozen lines.

He read the letter to the last word; folded it again with all the carefulness and precision of a man of business; and, just when Mr. Pickwick expected some great outbreak of feeling, dipped a pen in the inkstand, and said as quietly as if he were speaking on the most ordinary counting-house topic:

"What is Nathaniel's address, Mr. Pickwick?"

"The George and Vulture, at present," replied that gentleman.

"George and Vulture. Where is that?"

"George Yard, Lombard Street."

"In the City?"

"Yes."

The old gentleman methodically indorsed the address on the back of the letter; and then, placing it in the desk, which he locked, said as he got off the stool and put the bunch of keys in his pocket:

"I suppose there is nothing else which need detain us, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Nothing else, my dear sir!" observed that warm-hearted person in indignant amazement. "Nothing else! Have you no opinion to express on this momentous event in our young friend's life? No assurance to convey to him, through me, of the continuance of your affection and protection? Nothing to say which will cheer and sustain him, and the anxious girl who looks to him for comfort and support? My dear sir, consider."

"I will consider," replied the old gentleman. "I have nothing to say just now. I am a man of business, Mr.

Pickwick. I never commit myself hastily in any affair, and from what I see of this, I by no means like the appearance of it. A thousand pounds is not much, Mr. Pickwick."

"You're very right, sir," interposed Ben Allen, just awake enough to know that he had spent *his* thousand pounds without the smallest difficulty. "You're an intelligent man. Bob, he's a very knowing fellow this."

"I am very happy to find that *you* do me the justice to make the admission, sir," said Mr. Winkle, senior, looking contemptuously at Ben Allen, who was shaking his head profoundly. "The fact is, Mr. Pickwick, that when I gave my son a roving licence for a year or so, to see something of men and manners (which he has done under your auspices), so that he might not enter into life a mere boarding-school milk-sop to be gulled by everybody, I never bargained for this. He knows that, very well, so if I withdraw my countenance from him on this account, he has no call to be surprised. He shall hear from me, Mr. Pickwick. Good night, sir. Margaret, open the door."

All this time, Bob Sawyer had been nudging Mr. Ben Allen to say something on the right side; Ben accordingly now burst, without the slightest preliminary notice, into a brief but impassioned piece of eloquence.

"Sir," said Mr. Ben Allen, staring at the old gentleman, out of a pair of very dim and languid eyes, and working his right arm vehemently up and down, "you—you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"As the lady's brother, of course you are an excellent judge of the question," retorted Mr. Winkle, senior. "There; that's enough. Pray say no more, Mr. Pickwick. Good night, gentlemen!"

With these words the old gentleman took up the candlestick, and opening the room door, politely motioned towards the passage.

"You will regret this, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, setting his teeth close together to keep down his choler; for he felt how important the effect might prove to his young friend.

"I am at present of a different opinion," calmly replied Mr. Winkle, senior. "Once again, gentlemen, I wish you a good night."

Mr. Pickwick walked, with angry strides, into the street. Mr. Bob Sawyer, completely quelled by the decision of the old gentleman's manner, took the same course. Mr. Ben

Allen's hat rolled down the steps immediately afterwards, and Mr. Ben Allen's body followed it directly. The whole party went silent and supperless to bed; and Mr. Pickwick thought, just before he fell asleep, that if he had known Mr. Winkle, senior, had been quite so much of a man of business, it was extremely probable he might never have waited upon him on such an errand.

CHAPTER LI

IN WHICH MR. PICKWICK ENCOUNTERS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE. TO WHICH FORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCE THE READER IS MAINLY INDEBTED FOR MATTER OF THRILLING INTEREST HEREIN SET DOWN, CONCERNING TWO GREAT PUBLIC MEN OF MIGHT AND POWER

THE morning which broke upon Mr. Pickwick's sight, at eight o'clock, was not at all calculated to elevate his spirits, or to lessen the depression which the unlooked-for result of his embassy inspired. The sky was dark and gloomy, the air was damp and raw, the streets were wet and sloppy. The smoke hung sluggishly above the chimney-tops as if it lacked the courage to rise, and the rain came slowly and doggedly down, as if it had not even the spirit to pour. A game-cock in the stable-yard, deprived of every spark of his accustomed animation, balanced himself dismally on one leg in a corner; a donkey, moping with drooping head under the narrow roof of an outhouse, appeared from his meditative and miserable countenance to be contemplating suicide. In the street, umbrellas were the only things to be seen, and the clicking of pattens and splashing of rain-drops, were the only sounds to be heard.

The breakfast was interrupted by very little conversation; even Mr. Bob Sawyer felt the influence of the weather, and the previous day's excitement. In his own expressive language he was "floored." So was Mr. Ben Allen. So was Mr. Pickwick.

In protracted expectation of the weather clearing up, the last evening paper from London was read and re-read with an intensity of interest only known in cases of extreme destitution; every inch of the carpet was walked over, with similar perseverance; the windows were looked out

of, often enough to justify the imposition of an additional duty upon them; all kinds of topics of conversation were started, and failed; and at length Mr. Pickwick, when noon had arrived, without a change for the better, rang the bell resolutely and ordered out the chaise.

Although the roads were miry, and the drizzling rain came down harder than it had done yet, and although the mud and wet splashed in at the open windows of the carriage to such an extent that the discomfort was almost as great to the pair of insides as to the pair of outsides, still there was something in the motion, and the sense of being up and doing, which was so infinitely superior to being pent in a dull room, looking at the dull rain dripping into a dull street, that they all agreed, on starting, that the change was a great improvement, and wondered how they could possibly have delayed making it, as long as they had done.

When they stopped to change at Coventry, the steam ascended from the horses in such clouds as wholly to obscure the hostler, whose voice was however heard to declare from the mist, that he expected the first Gold Medal from the Humane Society on their next distribution of rewards, for taking the postboy's hat off; the water descending from the brim of which, the invisible gentleman declared must inevitably have drowned him (the postboy), but for his great presence of mind in tearing it promptly from his head, and drying the gasping man's countenance with a wisp of straw.

"This is pleasant," said Bob Sawyer, turning up his coat collar, and pulling the shawl over his mouth to concentrate the fumes of a glass of brandy just swallowed.

"Wery," replied Sam, composedly.

"You don't seem to mind it," observed Bob.

"Vy, I don't exactly see no good my mindin' on it 'ud do. sir," replied Sam.

"That's an unanswerable reason, anyhow," said Bob.

"Yes, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller. "Wotever is, is right, as the young nobleman sweetly remarked wen they put him down in the pension list 'cos his mother's uncle's wife's grandfather vunce lit the king's pipe with a portable tinder-box."

"Not a bad notion that, Sam," said Mr. Bob Sawyer approvingly.

"Just wot the young nobleman said ev'ry quarter-day arterwards for the rest of his life," replied Mr. Weller.

"Wos you ever called in," inquired Sam, glancing at the driver, after a short silence, and lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper: "wos you ever called in, ven you wos 'prentice to a sawbones, to wisit a postboy?"

"I don't remember that I ever was," replied Bob Sawyer.

"You never see a postboy in that 'ere hospital as you *walked* (as they says o' the ghosts), did you?" demanded Sam.

"No," replied Bob Sawyer. "I don't think I ever did."

"Never know'd a churchyard where there wos a postboy's tombstone, or see a dead postboy, did you?" inquired Sam, pursuing his catechism.

"No," rejoined Bob, "I never did."

"No!" rejoined Sam, triumphantly. "Nor never vill; and there's another thing that no man never see, and that's a dead donkey. No man never see a dead donkey, 'cept the gen'l'm'n in the black silk smalls as know'd the young 'ooman as kep a goat; and that wos a French donkey, so wery likely he warn't wun o' the reg'lar breed."

"Well, what has that got to do with the postboys?" asked Bob Sawyer.

"This here," replied Sam. "Without goin' so far as to as-ert, as some wery sensible people do, that postboys and donkeys is both immortal, wot I say is this; that wenever they feels theirselves gettin' stiff and past their work, they just rides off together, wun postboy to a pair in the usual way; wot becomes on 'em nobody knows, but it's wery probable as they starts away to take their pleasure in some other world, for there ain't a man alive as ever see, either a donkey or a postboy, a takin' his pleasure in this!"

Expatiating upon this learned and remarkable theory, and citing many curious statistical and other facts in its support, Sam Weller beguiled the time until they reached Dunchurch, where a dry postboy and fresh horses were procured; the next stage was Daventry, and the next Towcester; and at the end of each stage it rained harder than it had done at the beginning.

"I say," remonstrated Bob Sawyer, looking in at the coach window, as they pulled up before the door of the Saracen's Head, Towcester, "this won't do, you know."

"Bless me!" said Mr. Pickwick, just awaking from a nap, "I'm afraid you're wet."

"Oh you are, are you?" returned Bob. "Yes, I am, a little that way. Uncomfortably damp, perhaps."

Bob did look dampish, inasmuch as the rain was streaming from his neck, elbows, cuffs, skirts, and knees; and his whole apparel shone so with the wet, that it might have been mistaken for a full suit of prepared oilskin.

"*I am* rather wet," said Bob, giving himself a shake, and casting a little hydraulic shower around, like a Newfoundland dog just emerged from the water.

"I think it's quite impossible to go on to-night," interposed Ben.

"Out of the question, sir," remarked Sam Weller, coming to assist in the conference; "it's a cruelty to animals, sir, to ask 'em to do it. There's beds here, sir," said Sam, addressing his master, "everything clean and comfortable. Wery good little dinner, sir, hey can get ready in half an hour—pair of fowls, sir, and a weal cutlet; French beans, 'taters, tart, and tidiness. You'd better stop vere you are, sir, if I might recommend. Take advice, sir, as the doctor said."

The host of the Saracen's Head opportunely appeared at this moment, to confirm Mr. Weller's statement relative to the accommodations of the establishment, and to back his entreaties with a variety of dismal conjectures regarding the state of the roads, the doubt of fresh horses being to be had at the next stage, the dead certainty of its raining all night, the equally mortal certainty of its clearing up in the morning, and other topics of inducement familiar to innkeepers.

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick; "but I must send a letter to London by some conveyance, so that it may be delivered the very first thing in the morning, or I must go forward at all hazards."

The landlord smiled his delight. Nothing could be easier than for the gentleman to inclose a letter in a sheet of brown paper, and send it on, either by the mail or the night coach from Birmingham. If the gentleman were particularly anxious to have it left as soon as possible, he might write outside, "To be delivered immediately," which was sure to be attended to; or "pay the bearer half-a-crown extra for instant delivery," which was surer still.

"Very well," said Mr. Pickwick, "then we will stop here."

"Lights in the Sun, John; make up the fire; the gentlemen are wet!" cried the landlord. "This way, gentlemen;

don't trouble yourselves about the postboy now, sir. I'll send him to you when you ring for him, sir. Now, John, the candles."

The candles were brought, the fire was stirred up, and a fresh log of wood thrown on. In ten minutes' time, a waiter was laying the cloth for dinner, the curtains were drawn, the fire was blazing brightly, and everything looked (as everything always does, in all decent English inns) as if the travellers had been expected, and their comforts prepared, for days beforehand.

Mr. Pickwick sat down at a side table, and hastily indited a note to Mr. Winkle, merely informing him that he was detained by stress of weather, but would certainly be in London next day; until when he deferred any account of his proceedings. This note was hastily made into a parcel, and despatched to the bar per Mr. Samuel Weller.

Sam left it with the landlady, and was returning to pull his master's boots off, after drying himself by the kitchen fire, when, glancing casually through a half-opened door, he was arrested by the sight of a gentleman with a sandy head who had a large bundle of newspapers lying on the table before him, and was perusing the leading article of one with a settled sneer which curled up his nose and all his other features into a majestic expression of haughty contempt.

"Hallo!" said Sam, "I ought to know that 'ere head and them features; the eye-glass, too, and the broad brimmed tile! Eatanswill to vit, or I'm a Roman."

Sam was taken with a troublesome cough, at once, for the purpose of attracting the gentleman's attention; the gentleman starting at the sound, raised his head and his eye-glass, and disclosed to view the profound and thoughtful features of Mr. Pott, of the Eatanswill Gazette.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said Sam, advancing with a bow, "my master's here, Mr. Pott."

"Hush, hush!" cried Pott, drawing Sam into the room, and closing the door, with a countenance of mysterious dread and apprehension.

"Wot's the matter, sir?" inquired Sam, looking vacantly about him.

"Not a whisper of my name," replied Pott; "this is a buff neighbourhood. If the excited and irritable populace knew I was here, I should be torn to pieces."

"No! Would you, sir?" inquired Sam.

"I should be the victim of their fury," replied Pott. "Now, young man, what of your master?"

"He's stopping here to-night on his way to town, with a couple of friends," replied Sam.

"Is Mr. Winkle one of them?" inquired Pott, with a slight frown.

"No, sir. Mr. Winkle stops at home now," rejoined Sam. "He's married."

"Married!" exclaimed Pott, with frightful vehemence. He stopped, smiled darkly, and added, in a low, vindictive tone: "It serves him right!"

Having given vent to this cruel ebullition of deadly malice and cold-blooded triumph over a fallen enemy, Mr. Pott inquired whether Mr. Pickwick's friends were "blue." Receiving a most satisfactory answer in the affirmative from Sam, who knew as much about the matter as Pott himself, he consented to accompany him to Mr. Pickwick's room, where a hearty welcome awaited him. An agreement to club dinners together was at once made and ratified.

"And how are matters going on in Eatanswill?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, when Pott had taken a seat near the fire, and the whole party had got their wet boots off, and dry slippers on. "Is the Independent still in being?"

"The Independent, sir," replied Pott, "is still dragging on a wretched and lingering career. Abhorred and despised by even the few who are cognizant of its miserable and disgraceful existence; stifled by the very filth it so profusely scatters; rendered deaf and blind by the exhalations of its own slime; the obscene journal, happily unconscious of its degraded state, is rapidly sinking beneath that treacherous mud which, while it seems to give it a firm standing with the low and debased classes of society, is nevertheless, rising above its detested head, and will speedily engulf it for ever."

Having delivered this manifesto (which formed a portion of his last week's leader) with vehement articulation, the editor paused to take breath, and looked majestically at Bob Sawyer.

"You are a young man, sir," said Pott.

Mr. Bob Sawyer nodded.

"So are you, sir," said Pott, addressing Mr. Ben Allen.

Ben admitted the soft impeachment.

"And are both deeply imbued with those blue principles, which, so long as I live, I have pledged myself to the people

of these kingdoms to support and to maintain ?" suggested Pott.

"Why, I don't exactly know about that," replied Bob Sawyer. "I am—"

"Not buff, Mr. Pickwick," interrupted Pott, drawing back his chair, "your friend is not buff, sir ?"

"No, no," rejoined Bob, "I'm a kind of plaid at present ; a compound of all sorts of colours."

"A waverer," said Pott, solemnly, "a waverer. I should like to show you a series of eight articles, sir, that have appeared in the Eatanswill Gazette. I think I may venture to say that you would not be long in establishing your opinions on a firm and solid blue basis, sir."

"I dare say I should turn very blue, long before I got to the end of them," responded Bob.

Mr. Pott looked dubiously at Bob Sawyer for some seconds, and, turning to Mr. Pickwick, said :

"You have seen the literary articles which have appeared at intervals in the Eatanswill Gazette in the course of the last three months, and which have excited such general—I may say such universal—attention and admiration ?"

"Why," replied Mr. Pickwick, slightly embarrassed by the question, "the fact is, I have been so much engaged in other ways, that I really have not had an opportunity of perusing them."

"You should do so, sir," said Pott, with a severe countenance.

"I will," said Mr. Pickwick.

"They appeared in the form of a copious review of a work on Chinese metaphysics, sir," said Pott.

"Oh," observed Mr. Pickwick ; "from your pen, I hope ?"

"From the pen of my critic, sir," rejoined Pott with dignity.

"An abstruse subject I should conceive," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very, sir," responded Pott, looking intensely sage. "He *crammed* for it, to use a technical but expressive term ; he read up for the subject, at my desire, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*."

"Indeed !" said Mr. Pickwick ; "I was not aware that that valuable work contained any information respecting Chinese metaphysics."

"He read, sir," rejoined Pott, laying his hand on Mr.

Pickwick's knee, and looking round with a smile of intellectual superiority, "he read for metaphysics under the letter M, and for China under the letter C, and combined his information, sir?"

Mr. Pott's features assumed so much additional grandeur at the recollection of the power and research displayed in the learned effusions in question, that some minutes elapsed before Mr. Pickwick felt emboldened to renew the conversation; at length, as the Editor's countenance gradually relaxed into its customary expression of moral supremacy, he ventured to resume the discourse by asking:

"Is it fair to inquire what great object has brought you so far from home?"

"That object which actuates and animates me in all my gigantic labours, sir," replied Pott, with a calm smile; "my country's good."

"I supposed it was some public mission," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, sir," resumed Pott, "it is." Here, bending towards Mr. Pickwick, he whispered in a deep hollow voice, "A buff ball, sir, will take place in Birmingham to-morrow evening."

"God bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, sir, and supper," added Pott.

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick.

Pott nodded portentously.

Now, although Mr. Pickwick feigned to stand aghast at this disclosure, he was so little versed in local politics that he was unable to form an adequate comprehension of the importance of the dire conspiracy it referred to; observing which, Mr. Pott, drawing forth the last number of the Eatanswill Gazette, and referring to the same, delivered himself of the following paragraph:

"HOLE-AND-CORNER BUFFERY.

"A reptile contemporary has recently sweltered forth his black venom in the vain and hopeless attempt of sullyng the fair name of our distinguished and excellent representative, the Honourable Mr. Slumkey—that Slumkey whom we, long before he gained his present noble and exalted position, predicted would one day be, as he now is, at once his country's brightest honour, and her proudest boast: alike her bold defender and her honest pride—our reptile contem-

porary, we say, has made himself merry, at the expense of a superbly embossed plated coal-scuttle, which has been presented to that glorious man by his enraptured constituents, and towards the purchase of which, the nameless wretch insinuates, the Honourable Mr. Slumkey himself contributed, through a confidential friend of his butler's, more than three-fourths of the whole sum subscribed. Why, does not the crawling creature see, that even if this be the fact, the Honourable Mr. Slumkey only appears in a still more amiable and radiant light than before, if that be possible? Does not even *his* obtuseness perceive that this amiable and touching desire to carry out the wishes of the constituent body, must for ever endear him to the hearts and souls of such of his fellow townsmen as are not worse than swine; or, in other words, who are not as debased as our contemporary himself? But such is the wretched trickery of hole-and-corner Buffery! These are not its only artifices. Treason is abroad. We boldly state, now that we are goaded to the disclosure, and we throw ourselves on the country and its constables for protection—we boldly state that secret preparations are at this moment in progress for a Buff ball; which is to be held in a Buff town, in the very heart and centre of a Buff population; which is to be conducted by a Buff master of the ceremonies; which is to be attended by four ultra Buff members of parliament, and the admission to which, is to be by Buff tickets! Does our fiendish contemporary wince? Let him writhe, in impotent malice, as we pen the words, **WE WILL BE THERE.**"

"There, sir," said Pott, folding up the paper quite exhausted, "that is the state of the case!"

The landlord and waiter entering at the moment with dinner, caused Mr. Pott to lay his finger on his lip, in token that he considered his life in Mr. Pickwick's hands, and depended on his secrecy. Messrs. Bob Sawyer and Benjamin Allen, who had irreverently fallen asleep during the reading of the quotation from the Eatanswill Gazette, and the discussion which followed it, were roused by the mere whispering of the talismanic word "Dinner" in their ears: and to dinner they went with good digestion waiting on appetite, and health on both, and a waiter on all three.

In the course of the dinner and the sitting which succeeded it, Mr. Pott descending, for a few moments, to domestic topics, informed Mr. Pickwick that the air of Eatanswill not

agreeing with his lady, she was then engaged in making a tour of different fashionable watering-places with a view to the recovery of her wonted health and spirits; this was a delicate veiling of the fact that Mrs. Pott, acting upon her often repeated threat of separation, had, in virtue of an arrangement negotiated by her brother, the Lieutenant, and concluded by Mr. Pott, permanently retired with the faithful body-guard upon one moiety or half-part of the annual income and profits arising from the editorship and sale of the Eatanswill Gazette.

While the great Mr. Pott was dwelling upon this and other matters, enlivening the conversation from time to time with various extracts from his own lucubrations, a stern stranger, calling from the window of a stage-coach, outward bound, which halted at the inn to deliver packages, requested to know, whether, if he stopped short on his journey and remained there for the night, he could be furnished with the necessary accommodation of a bed and bedstead.

"Certainly, sir," replied the landlord.

"I can, can I?" inquired the stranger, who seemed habitually suspicious in look and manner.

"No doubt of it, sir," replied the landlord.

"Good," said the stranger. "Coachman, I get down here. Guard, my carpet-bag!"

Bidding the other passengers good night, in a rather snappish manner, the stranger alighted. He was a shortish gentleman, with very stiff black hair cut in the porcupine or blacking-brush style, and standing stiff and straight all over his head; his aspect was pompous and threatening; his manner was peremptory; his eyes were sharp and restless; and his whole bearing bespoke a feeling of great confidence in himself, and a consciousness of immeasurable superiority over all other people.

This gentleman was shown into the room originally assigned to the patriotic Mr. Pott; and the waiter remarked, in dumb astonishment at the singular coincidence, that he had no sooner lighted the candles than the gentleman, diving into his hat, drew forth a newspaper, and began to read it with the very same expression of indignant scorn, which, upon the majestic features of Pott, had paralysed his energies an hour before. The man observed too, that whereas Mr. Pott's scorn had been roused by a newspaper headed *The Eatanswill Independent*, this gentleman's withering contempt

was awakened by a newspaper entitled *The Eatanswill Gazette*.

"Send the landlord," said the stranger.

"Yes, sir," rejoined the waiter.

The landlord was sent, and came.

"Are you the landlord?" inquired the gentleman.

"I am, sir," replied the landlord.

"Do you know me?" demanded the gentleman.

"I have not that pleasure, sir," rejoined the landlord.

"My name is Slurk," said the gentleman.

The landlord slightly inclined his head.

"Slurk, sir," repeated the gentleman, haughtily. "Do you know me now, man?"

The landlord scratched his head, looked at the ceiling, and at the stranger, and smiled feebly.

"Do you know me, man?" inquired the stranger, angrily.

The landlord made a strong effort, and at length replied: "Well, sir, I do *not* know you."

"Great Heaven!" said the stranger, dashing his clenched fist upon the table. "And this is popularity!"

The landlord took a step or two towards the door; the stranger fixing his eyes upon him, resumed.

"This," said the stranger, "this is gratitude for years of labour and study in behalf of the masses. I alight wet and weary; no enthusiastic crowds press forward to greet their champion; the church-bells are silent; the very name elicits no responsive feeling in their torpid bosoms. It is enough," said the agitated Mr. Slurk, pacing to and fro, "to curdle the ink in one's pen, and induce one to abandon their cause for ever."

"Did you say brandy and water, sir?" said the landlord, venturing a hint.

"Rum," said Mr. Slurk, turning fiercely upon him. "Have you got a fire anywhere?"

"We can light one directly, sir," said the landlord.

"Which will throw out no heat until it is bed-time," interrupted Mr. Slurk. "Is there anybody in the kitchen?"

Not a soul. There was a beautiful fire. Everybody had gone, and the house door was closed for the night.

"I will drink my rum and water," said Mr. Slurk, "by the kitchen fire." So, gathering up his hat and newspaper, he stalked solemnly behind the landlord to that humble apartment, and throwing himself on a settle by the fireside,

resumed his countenance of scorn, and began to read and drink in silent dignity.

Now, some demon of discord, flying over the Saracen's Head at that moment, on casting down his eyes in mere idle curiosity, happened to behold Slurk established comfortably by the kitchen fire, and Pott slightly elevated with wine in another room; upon which the malicious demon, darting down into the last-mentioned apartment with inconceivable rapidity, passed at once into the head of Mr. Bob Sawyer, and prompted him for his (the demon's) own evil purposes to speak as follows:

"I say, we've let the fire out. It's uncommonly cold after the rain, isn't it?"

"It really is," replied Mr. Pickwick, shivering.

"It wouldn't be a bad notion to have a cigar by the kitchen fire, would it?" said Bob Sawyer, still prompted by the demon aforesaid.

"It would be particularly comfortable, *I* think," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Mr. Pott, what do you say?"

Mr. Pott yielded a ready assent; and all four travellers, each with his glass in his hand, at once betook themselves to the kitchen, with Sam Weller heading the procession to show them the way.

The stranger was still reading; he looked up and started. Mr. Pott started.

"What's the matter?" whispered Mr. Pickwick.

"That reptile!" replied Pott.

"What reptile?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking about him for fear he should tread on some overgrown black beetle, or dropsical spider.

"That reptile," whispered Pott, catching Mr. Pickwick by the arm, and pointing towards the stranger. "That reptile Slurk, of the Independent!"

"Perhaps we had better retire," whispered Mr. Pickwick.

"Never, sir," rejoined Pott, pot-valiant in a double sense, "never." With these words, Mr. Pott took up his position on an opposite settle, and selecting one from a little bundle of newspapers, began to read against his enemy.

Mr. Pott, of course, read the Independent, and Mr. Slurk, of course, read the Gazette; and each gentleman audibly expressed his contempt of the other's compositions by bitter laughs and sarcastic sniffs; whence they proceeded to more open expressions of opinion, such as "absurd," "wretched,"

"atrocious," "humbug," "knavery," "dirt," "filth," "slime," "ditch-water," and other critical remarks of the like nature.

Both Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Ben Allen had beheld these symptoms of rivalry and hatred, with a degree of delight which imparted great additional relish to the cigars at which they were puffing most vigorously. The moment they began to flag, the mischievous Mr. Bob Sawyer, addressing Slurk with great politeness, said:

"Will you allow me to look at your paper, sir, when you have quite done with it!"

"You will find very little to repay you for your trouble in this contemptible *thing*, sir," replied Slurk, bestowing a Satanic frown on Pott.

"You shall have this presently," said Pott, looking up, pale with rage, and quivering in his speech, from the same cause. "Ha! ha! you will be amused with this *fellow's* audacity."

Terrific emphasis was laid upon this "*thing*" and "*fellow*;" and the faces of both editors began to glow with defiance.

"The ribaldry of this miserable man is despicably disgusting," said Pott, pretending to address Bob Sawyer, and scowling upon Slurk.

Here, Mr. Slurk laughed very heartily, and folding up the paper so as to get at a fresh column conveniently, said, that the blockhead really amused him.

"What an impudent blunderer this fellow is," said Pott, turning from pink to crimson.

"Did you ever read any of this man's foolery, sir?" inquired Slurk, of Bob Sawyer.

"Never," replied Bob; "is it very bad?"

"Oh, shocking! shocking!" rejoined Slurk.

"Really! Dear me, this is too atrocious!" exclaimed Pott, at this juncture; still feigning to be absorbed in his reading.

"If you can wade through a few sentences of malice, meanness, falsehood, perjury, treachery, and cant," said Slurk, handing the paper to Bob, "you will, perhaps, be somewhat repaid by a laugh at the style of this ungrammatical twaddler."

"What's that you said, sir?" inquired Mr. Pott, looking up, trembling all over with passion.

"What's that to you, sir?" replied Slurk.

"Ungrammatical twaddler, was it, sir?" said Pott.

"Yes, sir, it was," replied Slurk; "and *blue bore*, sir, if you like that better; ha! ha!"

Mr. Pott retorted not a word to this jocose insult, but deliberately folded up his copy of the Independent, flattened it carefully down, crushed it beneath his boot, spat upon it with great ceremony, and flung it into the fire.

"There, sir," said Pott, retreating from the stove, "and that's the way I would serve the viper who produces it, if I were not, fortunately for him, restrained by the laws of my country."

"Serve him so, sir!" cried Slurk, starting up. "Those laws shall never be appealed to by him, sir, in such a case. Serve him so, sir!"

"Hear! hear!" said Bob Sawyer.

"Nothing can be fairer," observed Mr. Ben Allen.

"Serve him so, sir!" reiterated Slurk, in a loud voice.

Mr. Pott darted a look of contempt, which might have withered an anchor.

"Serve him so, sir!" reiterated Slurk, in a louder voice than before.

"I will not, sir," rejoined Pott.

"Oh, you won't, won't you, sir?" said Mr. Slurk, in a taunting manner; "you hear this, gentlemen! He won't; not that he's afraid; oh, no! he *won't*. Ha! ha!"

"I consider you, sir," said Mr. Pott, moved by this sarcasm, "I consider you a viper. I look upon you, sir, as a man who has placed himself beyond the pale of society, by his most audacious, disgraceful, and abominable public conduct. I view you, sir, personally and politically, in no other light than as a most unparalleled and unmitigated viper."

The indignant Independent did not wait to hear the end of this personal denunciation; for, catching up his carpet-bag which was well stuffed with moveables, he swung it in the air as Pott turned away, and, letting it fall with a circular sweep on his head, just at that particular angle of the bag where a good thick hair-brush happened to be packed, caused a sharp crash to be heard throughout the kitchen, and brought him at once to the ground.

"Gentlemen," cried Mr. Pickwick, as Pott started up and seized the fire-shovel, "gentlemen! Consider, for Heaven's sake—help—Sam—here—pray, gentlemen—interfere, somebody."

Uttering these incoherent exclamations, Mr. Pickwick

rushed between the infuriated combatants just in time to receive the carpet-bag on one side of his body, and the fire-shovel on the other. Whether the representatives of the public feeling of Eatanswill were blinded by animosity, or (being both acute reasoners) saw the advantage of having a third party between them to bear all the blows, certain it is that they paid not the slightest attention to Mr. Pickwick, but defying each other with great spirit plied the carpet-bag and the fire-shovel most fearlessly. Mr. Pickwick would unquestionably have suffered severely for his humane interference, if Mr. Weller, attracted by his master's cries, had not rushed in at the moment, and, snatching up a meal-sack, effectually stopped the conflict by drawing it over the head and shoulders of the mighty Pott, and clasping him tight round the shoulders.

"Take away that 'ere bag from the t'other madman," said Sam to Ben Allen and Bob Sawyer, who had done nothing but dodge round the group, each with a tortoise-shell lancet in his hand, ready to bleed the first man stunned. "Give it up, you wretched little creetur, or I'll smother you in it."

Awed by these threats, and quite out of breath, the Independent suffered himself to be disarmed; and Mr. Weller, removing the extinguisher from Pott, set him free with a caution.

"You take yourselves off to bed quietly," said Sam, "or I'll put you both in it, and let you fight it out with the mouth tied, as I would a dozen sich, if they played these games. And you have the goodness to come this here way, sir, if you please."

Thus addressing his master, Sam took him by the arm, and led him off, while the rival editors were severally removed to their beds by the landlord, under the inspection of Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen; breathing, as they went away, many sanguinary threats, and making vague appointments for mortal combat next day. When they came to think it over, however, it occurred to them that they could do it much better in print, so they recommenced deadly hostilities without delay; and all Eatanswill rung with their boldness—on paper.

They had taken themselves off in separate coaches, early next morning, before the other travellers were stirring; and the weather having now cleared up, the chaise companions once more turned their faces to London.



THE RIVAL EDITORS

CHAPTER LIII

COMPRISING THE FINAL EXIT OF MR. JINGLE AND JOB TROTTER; WITH A GREAT MORNING OF BUSINESS IN GRAY'S INN SQUARE. CONCLUDING WITH A DOUBLE KNOCK AT MR. PERKER'S DOOR

WHEN Arabella, after some gentle preparation, and many assurances that there was not the least occasion for being low-spirited, was at length made acquainted by Mr. Pickwick with the unsatisfactory result of his visit to Birmingham, she burst into tears, and sobbing aloud, lamented in moving terms that she should have been the unhappy cause of any estrangement between a father and his son.

"My dear girl," said Mr. Pickwick, kindly, "it is no fault of yours. It was impossible to foresee that the old gentleman would be so strongly prepossessed against his son's marriage, you know. I am sure," added Mr. Pickwick, glancing at her pretty face, "he can have very little idea of the pleasure he denies himself."

"Oh, my dear Mr. Pickwick," said Arabella, "what shall we do, if he continues to be angry with us?"

"Why, wait patiently, my dear, until he thinks better of it," replied Mr. Pickwick, cheerfully.

"But, dear Mr. Pickwick, what is to become of Nathaniel if his father withdraws his assistance?" urged Arabella.

"In that case, my love," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, "I will venture to prophesy that he will find some other friend who will not be backward in helping him to start in the world."

The significance of this reply was not so well disguised by Mr. Pickwick but that Arabella understood it. So, throwing her arms around his neck, and kissing him affectionately, she sobbed louder than before.

"Come, come," said Mr. Pickwick, taking her hand, "we will wait here a few days longer, and see whether he writes or takes any other notice of your husband's communication.

If not, I have thought of half a dozen plans, any one of which would make you happy at once. There, my dear, there!"

With these words, Mr. Pickwick gently pressed Arabella's hand, and bade her dry her eyes, and not distress her husband. Upon which, Arabella, who was one of the best little creatures alive, put her handkerchief in her reticule, and by the time Mr. Winkle joined them, exhibited in full lustre the same beaming smiles and sparkling eyes that had originally captivated him.

"This is a distressing predicament for these young people," thought Mr. Pickwick, as he dressed himself next morning. "I'll walk up to Perker's, and consult him about the matter."

As Mr. Pickwick was further prompted to betake himself to Gray's Inn Square by an anxious desire to come to a pecuniary settlement with the kind-hearted little attorney without further delay, he made a hurried breakfast, and executed his intention so speedily, that ten o'clock had not struck when he reached Gray's Inn.

It still wanted ten minutes to the hour when he had ascended the staircase on which Perker's chambers were. The clerks had not arrived yet, and he beguiled the time by looking out of the staircase window.

The healthy light of a fine October morning made even the dingy old houses brighten up a little: some of the dusty windows actually looking almost cheerful as the sun's rays gleamed upon them. Clerk after clerk hastened into the square by one or other of the entrances, and looking up at the Hall clock, accelerated or decreased his rate of walking according to the time at which his office hours nominally commenced; the half-past nine o'clock people suddenly becoming very brisk, and the ten o'clock gentlemen falling into a pace of most aristocratic slowness. The clock struck ten, and clerks poured in faster than ever, each one in a greater perspiration than his predecessor. The noise of unlocking and opening doors echoed and re-echoed on every side; heads appeared as if by magic in every window; the porters took up their stations for the day; the slipshod laundresses hurried off; the postman ran from house to house; and the whole legal hive was in a bustle.

"You're early, Mr. Pickwick," said a voice behind him.

"Ah, Mr. Lowten," replied that gentleman, looking round, and recognising his old acquaintance.

"Precious warm walking, isn't it?" said Lowten, drawing a Bramah key from his pocket, with a small plug therein, to keep the dust out.

"You appear to feel it so," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, smiling at the clerk, who was literally red hot.

"I've come along rather, I can tell you," replied Lowten. "It went the half hour as I came through the Polygon. I'm here before *him*, though, so I don't mind."

Comforting himself with this reflection, Mr. Lowten extracted the plug from the door-key, and having opened the door, replugged and repocketed his Bramah, and picked up the letters which the postman had dropped through the box. He then ushered Mr. Pickwick into the office. Here, in the twinkling of an eye, he divested himself of his coat, put on a threadbare garment which he took out of a desk, hung up his hat, pulled forth a few sheets of cartridge and blotting-paper in alternate layers, and sticking a pen behind his ear, rubbed his hands with an air of great satisfaction.

"There you see, Mr. Pickwick," he said, "now I'm complete. I've got my office coat on, and my pad out, and let him come as soon as he likes. You haven't got a pinch of snuff about you, have you?"

"No, I have not," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"I'm sorry for it," said Lowten. "Never mind. I'll run out presently, and get a bottle of soda. Don't I look rather queer about the eyes, Mr. Pickwick?"

The individual appealed to, surveyed Mr. Lowten's eyes from a distance, and expressed his opinion that no unusual queerness was perceptible in those features.

"I'm glad of it," said Lowten. "We were keeping it up pretty tolerably at the Stump last night, and I'm rather out of sorts this morning. Perker's been about that business of yours, by the bye."

"What business?" inquired Mr. Pickwick. "Mrs. Bardell's costs?"

"No, I don't mean that," replied Mr. Lowten. "About getting that customer that we paid the ten shillings in the pound to the bill discounter for, on your account—to get him out of the Fleet, you know—about getting him to Demerara."

"Oh! Mr. Jingle!" said Mr. Pickwick, hastily. "Yes. Well?"

"Well, it's all arranged," said Lowten, mending his pen.

"The agent at Liverpool said he had been obliged to you many times when you were in business, and he would be glad to take him on your recommendation."

"That's well," said Mr. Pickwick. "I am delighted to hear it."

"But I say," resumed Lowten, scraping the back of the pen preparatory to making a fresh split, "*what* a soft chap that other is!"

"Which other?"

"Why, that servant, or friend, or whatever he is; *you* know; Trotter."

"Ah?" said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile. "I always thought him the reverse."

"Well, and so did I, from what little I saw of him," replied Lowten, "it only shows how one may be deceived. What do you think of *his* going to Demerara, too?"

"What! And giving up what was offered him here!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Treating Perker's offer of eighteen bob a-week, and a rise if he behaved himself, like dirt," replied Lowten. "He said he must go along with the other one, and so they persuaded Perker to write again, and they've got him something on the same estate; not near so good, Perker says, as a convict would get in New South Wales, if he appeared at his trial in a new suit of clothes."

"Foolish fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, with glistening eyes. "Foolish fellow."

"Oh, it's worse than foolish; it's downright sneaking, you know," replied Lowten, nibbling the pen with a contemptuous face. "He says that he's the only friend he ever had, and he's attached to him, and all that. Friendship's a very good thing in its way: we are all very friendly and comfortable at the Stump, for instance, over our grog, where every man pays for himself; but damn hurting yourself for anybody else, you know! No man should have more than two attachments—the first, to number one, and the second to the ladies; that's what I say—ha! ha!" Mr. Lowten concluded with a loud laugh, half in jocularly, and half in derision, which was prematurely cut short by the sound of Perker's footsteps on the stairs: at the first approach of which, he vaulted on his stool with an agility most remarkable, and wrote intensely.

The greeting between Mr. Pickwick and his professional

adviser was warm and cordial; the client was scarcely ensconced in the attorney's arm chair, however, when a knock was heard at the door, and a voice inquired whether Mr. Perker was within.

"Hark!" said Perker, "that's one of our vagabond friends—Jingle himself, my dear sir. Will you see him?"

"What do you think?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, hesitating.

"Yes, I think you had better. Here, you sir, what's your name, walk in, will you?"

In compliance with this unceremonious invitation, Jingle and Job walked into the room, but, seeing Mr. Pickwick, stopped short in some confusion.

"Well," said Perker, "don't you know that gentleman?"

"Good reason to," replied Mr. Jingle, stepping forward.

"Mr. Pickwick—deepest obligations—life preserver—made a man of me—you shall never repent it, sir."

"I am happy to hear you say so," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You look much better."

"Thanks to you, sir—great change—Majesty's Fleet—unwholesome place—very," said Jingle, shaking his head. He was decently and cleanly dressed, and so was Job, who stood bolt upright behind him, staring at Mr. Pickwick with a visage of iron.

"When do they go to Liverpool?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, half aside to Perker.

"This evening, sir, at seven o'clock," said Job, taking one step forward. "By the heavy coach from the city, sir."

"Are your places taken?"

"They are, sir," replied Job.

"You have fully made up your mind to go?"

"I have, sir," answered Job.

"With regard to such an outfit as was indispensable for Jingle," said Perker, addressing Mr. Pickwick aloud, "I have taken upon myself to make an arrangement for the deduction of a small sum from his quarterly salary, which, being made only for one year, and regularly remitted, will provide for that expense. I entirely disapprove of your doing anything for him, my dear sir, which is not dependent on his own exertions and good conduct."

"Certainly," interposed Jingle, with great firmness.

"Clear head—man of the world—quite right—perfectly."

"By compounding with his creditor, releasing his clothes from the pawnbroker's, relieving him in prison, and paying

for his passage," continued Perker, without noticing Jingle's observation, "you have already lost upwards of fifty pounds."

"Not lost," said Jingle, hastily. "Pay it all—stick to business—cash up—every farthing. Yellow fever, perhaps—can't help that—if not—" Here Mr. Jingle paused, and striking the crown of his hat with great violence, passed his hand over his eyes, and sat down.

"He means to say," said Job, advancing a few paces, "that if he is not carried off by the fever, he will pay the money back again. If he lives, he will, Mr. Pickwick. I will see it done. I know he will, sir," said Job, with energy. "I could undertake to swear it."

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick, who had been bestowing a score or two of frowns upon Perker, to stop his summary of benefits conferred, which the little attorney obstinately disregarded, "you must be careful not to play any more desperate cricket matches, Mr. Jingle, or to renew your acquaintance with Sir Thomas Blazo, and I have little doubt of your preserving your health."

Mr. Jingle smiled at this sally, but looked rather foolish notwithstanding; so, Mr. Pickwick changed the subject by saying,

"You don't happen to know, do you, what has become of another friend of yours—a more humble one, whom I saw at Rochester?"

"Dismal Jemmy?" inquired Jingle.

"Yes."

Jingle shook his head.

"Clever rascal—queer fellow, hoaxing genius—Job's brother."

"Job's brother!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick. "Well, now I look at him closely, there is a likeness."

"We were always considered like each other, sir," said Job, with a cunning look just lurking in the corners of his eyes, "only I was really of a serious nature, and he never was. He emigrated to America, sir, in consequence of being too much sought after here, to be comfortable; and has never been heard of since."

"That accounts for my not having received the 'page from the romance of real life,' which he promised me one morning when he appeared to be contemplating suicide on Rochester Bridge, I suppose," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

"I need not inquire whether his dismal behaviour was natural or assumed."

"He could assume anything, sir," said Job. "You may consider yourself very fortunate in having escaped him so easily. On intimate terms he would have been even a more dangerous acquaintance than—" Job looked at Jingle, hesitated, and finally added, "than—than—myself even."

"A hopeful family yours. Mr. Trotter," said Perker, sealing a letter which he had just finished writing.

"Yes, sir," replied Job. "Very much so."

"Well," said the little man, laughing; "I hope you are going to disgrace it. Deliver this letter to the agent when you reach Liverpool, and let me advise you, gentlemen, not to be too knowing in the West Indies. If you throw away this chance, you will both richly deserve to be hanged, as I sincerely trust you will be. And now you had better leave Mr. Pickwick and me alone, for we have other matters to talk over, and time is precious." As Perker said this, he looked towards the door, with an evident desire to render the leave-taking as brief as possible.

It was brief enough on Mr. Jingle's part. He thanked the little attorney in a few hurried words for the kindness and promptitude with which he had rendered his assistance, and, turning to his benefactor, stood for a few seconds as if irresolute what to say or how to act. Job Trotter relieved his perplexity; for, with a humble and a grateful bow to Mr. Pickwick, he took his friend gently by the arm, and led him away.

"A worthy couple!" said Perker, as the door closed behind them.

"I hope they may become so," replied Mr. Pickwick. "What do you think? Is there any chance of their permanent reformation?"

Perker shrugged his shoulders doubtfully, but observing Mr. Pickwick's anxious and disappointed look, rejoined:

"Of course there is a chance. I hope it may prove a good one. They are unquestionably penitent now; but then, you know, they have the recollection of very recent suffering fresh upon them. What they may become, when that fades away, is a problem that neither you nor I can solve. However, my dear sir," added Perker, laying his hand on Mr. Pickwick's shoulder, "your object is equally honourable, whatever the result is. Whether that species

of benevolence which is so very cautious and long-sighted that it is seldom exercised at all, lest its owner should be imposed upon, and so wounded in his self-love, be real charity or a worldly counterfeit, I leave to wiser heads than mine to determine. But if those two fellows were to commit a burglary to-morrow, my opinion of this action would be equally high."

With these remarks, which were delivered in a much more animated and earnest manner than is usual in legal gentlemen, Perker drew his chair to his desk, and listened to Mr. Pickwick's recital of old Mr. Winkle's obstinacy.

"Give him a week," said Perker, nodding his head prophetically.

"Do you think he will come round?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"I think he will," rejoined Perker. "If not, we must try the young lady's persuasion; and that is what anybody but you, would have done at first."

Mr. Perker was taking a pinch of snuff with various grotesque contractions of countenance, eulogistic of the persuasive powers appertaining unto young ladies, when the murmur of inquiry and answer was heard in the outer office, and Lowten tapped at the door.

"Come in!" cried the little man.

The clerk came in, and shut the door after him, with great mystery.

"What's the matter?" inquired Perker.

"You're wanted, sir."

"Who wants me?"

Lowten looked at Mr. Pickwick, and coughed.

"Who wants me? Can't you speak, Mr. Lowten?"

"Why, sir," replied Lowten, "it's Dodson; and Fogg is with him."

"Bless my life!" said the little man, looking at his watch, "I appointed them to be here, at half-past eleven, to settle that matter of yours, Pickwick. I gave them an undertaking on which they sent down your discharge; it's very awkward, my dear sir; what will you do? Would you like to step into the next room?"

The next room being the identical room in which Messrs. Dodson and Fogg were, Mr. Pickwick replied that he would remain where he was: the more especially as Messrs. Dodson and Fogg ought to be ashamed to look him in the face,

instead of his being ashamed to see them. Which latter circumstance he begged Mr. Perker to note, with a glowing countenance and many marks of indignation.

"Very well, my dear sir, very well," replied Perker, "I can only say that if you expect either Dodson or Fogg to exhibit any symptom of shame or confusion at having to look you, or anybody else, in the face, you are the most sanguine man in your expectations that *I* ever met with. Show them in, Mr. Lowten."

Mr. Lowten disappeared with a grin, and immediately returned ushering in the firm, in due form of precedence: Dodson first, and Fogg afterwards.

"You have seen Mr. Pickwick, I believe?" said Perker to Dodson, inclining his pen in the direction where that gentleman was seated.

"How do you do, Mr. Pickwick?" said Dodson in a loud voice.

"Dear me," cried Fogg, "how do you do, Mr. Pickwick? I hope you are well, sir. I thought I knew the face," said Fogg, drawing up a chair, and looking round him with a smile.

Mr. Pickwick bent his head very slightly, in answer to these salutations, and, seeing Fogg pull a bundle of papers from his coat-pocket, rose and walked to the window.

"There's no occasion for Mr. Pickwick to move, Mr. Perker," said Fogg, untying the red tape which encircled the little bundle, and smiling again more sweetly than before. "Mr. Pickwick is pretty well acquainted with these proceedings. There are no secrets between us, I think. He! he! he!"

"Not many, I think," said Dodson. "Ha! ha! ha!" Then both the partners laughed together—pleasantly and cheerfully, as men who are going to receive money, often do.

"We shall make Mr. Pickwick pay for peeping," said Fogg, with considerable native humour, as he unfolded his papers. "The amount of the taxed costs is one hundred and thirty three, six, four, Mr. Perker."

There was a great comparing of papers, and turning over of leaves, by Fogg and Perker, after this statement of profit and loss. Meanwhile, Dodson said in an affable manner to Mr. Pickwick:

"I don't think you are looking quite so stout as when I had the pleasure of seeing you last, Mr. Pickwick."

"Possibly not, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, who had been flashing forth looks of fierce indignation, without producing the smallest effect on either of the sharp practitioners; "I believe I am not, sir. I have been persecuted and annoyed by Scoundrels of late, sir."

Perker coughed violently, and asked Mr. Pickwick whether he wouldn't like to look at the morning paper? To which inquiry Mr. Pickwick returned a most decided negative.

"True," said Dodson, "I dare say you *have* been annoyed in the Fleet; there are some odd gentry there. Whereabouts were your apartments, Mr. Pickwick?"

"My one room," replied that much-injured gentleman, "was on the Coffee-Room flight."

"Oh, indeed!" said Dodson. "I believe that is a very pleasant part of the establishment."

"Very," replied Mr. Pickwick drily.

There was a coolness about all this, which, to a gentleman of an excitable temperament, had, under the circumstances, rather an exasperating tendency. Mr. Pickwick restrained his wrath by gigantic efforts; but when Perker wrote a cheque for the whole amount, and Fogg deposited it in a small pocket-book with a triumphant smile playing over his pimply features which communicated itself likewise to the stern countenance of Dodson, he felt the blood in his cheeks tingling with indignation.

"Now, Mr. Dodson," said Fogg, putting up the pocket-book and drawing on his gloves, "I am at your service."

"Very good," said Dodson, rising, "I am quite ready."

"I am very happy," said Fogg, softened by the cheque, "to have had the pleasure of making Mr. Pickwick's acquaintance. I hope you don't think quite so ill of us, Mr. Pickwick, as when we first had the pleasure of seeing you."

"I hope not," said Dodson, with the high tone of calumniated virtue. "Mr. Pickwick now knows us better, I trust: whatever your opinion of gentlemen of our profession may be, I beg to assure you, sir, that I bear no ill-will or vindictive feeling towards you for the sentiments you thought proper to express in our office in Freeman's Court, Cornhill, on the occasion to which my partner has referred."

"Oh no, no: nor I," said Fogg, in a most forgiving manner.

"Our conduct, sir," said Dodson, "will speak for itself, and justify itself I hope, upon every occasion. We have been in the profession some years, Mr. Pickwick, and have been honoured with the confidence of many excellent clients. I wish you good morning, sir."

"Good morning, Mr. Pickwick," said Fogg. So saying, he put his umbrella under his arm, drew off his right glove, and extended the hand of reconciliation to that most indignant gentleman: who, thereupon, thrust his hands beneath his coat tails, and eyed the attorney with looks of scornful amazement.

"Lowten!" cried Perker at this moment. "Open the door."

"Wait one instant," said Mr. Pickwick, "Perker, I *will* speak."

"My dear sir, pray let the matter rest where it is," said the little attorney, who had been in a state of nervous apprehension during the whole interview; "Mr. Pickwick, I beg!"

"I will not be put down, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick hastily. "Mr. Dodson, you have addressed some remarks to me."

Dodson turned round, bent his head meekly, and smiled.

"Some remarks to me," repeated Mr. Pickwick, almost breathless; "and your partner has tendered me his hand, and you have both assumed a tone of forgiveness and high-mindedness, which is an extent of impudence that I was not prepared for, even in you."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Dodson.

"What, sir!" reiterated Fogg.

"Do you know that I have been the victim of your plots and conspiracies?" continued Mr. Pickwick. "Do you know that I am the man whom you have been imprisoning and robbing? Do you know that you were the attorneys for the plaintiff, in Bardell and Pickwick?"

"Yes, sir, we do know it," replied Dodson.

"Of course we know it, sir," rejoined Fogg, slapping his pocket—perhaps by accident.

"I see that you recollect it with satisfaction," said Mr. Pickwick, attempting to call up a sneer for the first time in his life, and failing most signally in so doing. "Although I have long been anxious to tell you, in plain terms, what my opinion of you is, I should have let even

this opportunity pass, in deference to my friend Perker's wishes, but for the unwarrantable tone you have assumed, and your insolent familiarity. I say insolent familiarity, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, turning upon Fogg with a fierceness of gesture which caused that person to retreat towards the door with great expedition.

"Take care, sir," said Dodson, who, though he was the biggest man of the party, had prudently intrenched himself behind Fogg, and was speaking over his head with a very pale face. "Let him assault you, Mr. Fogg; don't return it on any account."

"No, no, I won't return it," said Fogg, falling back a little more as he spoke; to the evident relief of his partner, who by these means was gradually getting into the outer office.

"You are," continued Mr. Pickwick, resuming the thread of his discourse, "you are a well-matched pair of mean, rascally, pettifogging robbers."

"Well," interposed Perker, "is that all?"

"It is all summed up in that," rejoined Mr. Pickwick; "they are mean, rascally, pettifogging robbers."

"There!" said Perker in a most conciliatory tone. "My dear sirs, he has said all he has to say. Now pray go. Lowten, is that door open?"

Mr. Lowten, with a distant giggle, replied in the affirmative.

"There, there—good morning—good morning—now pray, my dear sirs,—Mr. Lowten, the door!" cried the little man, pushing Dodson and Fogg, nothing loath, out of the office; "this way, my dear sirs,—now pray don't prolong this—dear me—Mr. Lowten—the door, sir—why don't you attend?"

"If there's law in England, sir," said Dodson, looking towards Mr. Pickwick, as he put on his hat, "you shall smart for this."

"You are a couple of mean—"

"Remember, sir, you pay dearly for this," said Fogg.

"—Rascally, pettifogging robbers!" continued Mr. Pickwick, taking not the least notice of the threats that were addressed to him.

"Robbers!" cried Mr. Pickwick, running to the stair-head, as the two attorneys descended.

"Robbers!" shouted Mr. Pickwick, breaking from Lowten and Perker, and thrusting his head out of the staircase window.

When Mr. Pickwick drew in his head again, his countenance was smiling and placid; and, walking quietly back into the office, he declared that he had now removed a great weight from his mind, and that he felt perfectly comfortable and happy.

Perker said nothing at all until he had emptied his snuff-box, and sent Lowten out to fill it, when he was seized with a fit of laughing, which lasted five minutes; at the expiration of which time he said that he supposed he ought to be very angry, but he couldn't think of the business seriously yet—when he could, he would be.

“Well, now,” said Mr. Pickwick, “let me have a settlement with you.”

“Of the same kind as the last?” inquired Perker, with another laugh.

“Not exactly,” rejoined Mr. Pickwick, drawing out his pocket-book, and shaking the little man heartily by the hand, “I only mean a pecuniary settlement. You have done me many acts of kindness that I can never repay, and have no wish to repay, for I prefer continuing the obligation.”

With this preface, the two friends dived into some very complicated accounts and vouchers, which, having been duly displayed and gone through by Perker, were at once discharged by Mr. Pickwick with many professions of esteem and friendship.

They had no sooner arrived at this point, than a most violent and startling knocking was heard at the door; it was not an ordinary double knock, but a constant and uninterrupted succession of the loudest single raps, as if the knocker were endowed with the perpetual motion, or the person outside had forgotten to leave off.

“Dear me, what's that!” exclaimed Perker, starting.

“I think it is a knock at the door,” said Mr. Pickwick, as if there could be the smallest doubt of the fact!

The knocker made a more energetic reply than words could have yielded, for it continued to hammer with surprising force and noise, without a moment's cessation.

“Dear me!” said Perker, ringing his bell, “we shall alarm the Inn. Mr. Lowten, don't you hear a knock?”

“I'll answer the door in one moment, sir,” replied the clerk.

The knocker appeared to hear the response, and to assert that it was quite impossible he could wait so long. It made a stupendous uproar.

"It's quite dreadful," said Mr. Pickwick, stopping his ears.

"Make haste, Mr. Lowten," Perker called out, "we shall have the panels beaten in."

Mr. Lowten, who was washing his hands in a dark closet, hurried to the door, and turning the handle, beheld the appearance which is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER LIV

CONTAINING SOME PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO THE DOUBLE KNOCK, AND OTHER MATTERS: AMONG WHICH CERTAIN INTERESTING DISCLOSURES RELATIVE TO MR. SNODGRASS AND A YOUNG LADY ARE BY NO MEANS IRRELEVANT TO THIS HISTORY

THE object that presented itself to the eyes of the astonished clerk, was a boy—a wonderfully fat boy—habited as a serving lad, standing upright on the mat, with his eyes closed as if in sleep. He had never seen such a fat boy, in or out of a travelling caravan; and this, coupled with the calmness and repose of his appearance, so very different from what was reasonably to have been expected of the inflicter of such knocks, smote him with wonder.

“What’s the matter?” inquired the clerk.

The extraordinary boy replied not a word; but he nodded once, and seemed, to the clerk’s imagination, to snore feebly.

“Where do you come from?” inquired the clerk.

The boy made no sign. He breathed heavily, but in all other respects was motionless.

The clerk repeated the question thrice, and receiving no answer, prepared to shut the door, when the boy suddenly opened his eyes, winked several times, sneezed once, and raised his hand as if to repeat the knocking. Finding the door open, he stared about him with astonishment, and at length fixed his eyes on Mr. Lowten’s face.

“What the devil do you knock in that way for?” inquired the clerk, angrily.

“Which way?” said the boy, in a slow and sleepy voice.

“Why, like forty hackney-coachmen,” replied the clerk.

“Because master said, I wasn’t to leave off knocking till they opened the door, for fear I should go to sleep,” said the boy.

"Well," said the clerk, "what message have you brought?"

"He's down stairs," rejoined the boy.

"Who?"

"Master. He wants to know whether you're at home."

Mr. Lowten bethought himself, at this juncture, of looking out of the window. Seeing an open carriage with a hearty old gentleman in it, looking up very anxiously, he ventured to beckon him; on which, the old gentleman jumped out directly.

"That's your master in the carriage, I suppose?" said Lowten.

The boy nodded.

All further inquiries were superseded by the appearance of old Wardle, who, running up stairs, and just recognising Lowten, passed at once into Mr. Perker's room.

"Pickwick!" said the old gentleman. "Your hand, my boy! Why have I never heard until the day before yesterday of your suffering yourself to be cooped up in jail? And why did you let him do it, Perker?"

"I couldn't help it, my dear sir," replied Perker, with a smile and a pinch of snuff: "you know how obstinate he is."

"Of course I do, of course I do," replied the old gentleman. "I am heartily glad to see him, notwithstanding. I will not lose sight of him again, in a hurry."

With these words, Wardle shook Mr. Pickwick's hand once more, and, having done the same by Perker, threw himself into an arm-chair; his jolly red face shining again with smiles and health.

"Well!" said Wardle. "Here are pretty goings on—a pinch of your snuff, Perker, my boy—never were such times, eh?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Mean!" replied Wardle. "Why, I think the girls are all running mad; that's no news, you'll say? Perhaps it's not; but it's true, for all that."

"You have not come up to London, of all places in the world, to tell us *that*, my dear sir, have you?" inquired Perker.

"No, not altogether," replied Wardle; "though it was the main cause of my coming. How's Arabella?"

"Very well," replied Mr. Pickwick, "and will be delighted to see you, I am sure."

"Black-eyed little jilt!" replied Wardle, "I had a great idea of marrying her myself, one of these odd days. But I am glad of it too, very glad."

"How did the intelligence reach you?" asked Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, it came to my girls, of course," replied Wardle. "Arabella wrote, the day before yesterday, to say she had made a stolen match without her husband's father's consent, and so you had gone down to get it when his refusing it couldn't prevent the match, and all the rest of it. I thought it a very good time to say something serious to *my* girls; so I said what a dreadful thing it was that children should marry without their parent's consent, and so forth; but, bless your hearts, I couldn't make the least impression upon them. They thought it such a much more dreadful thing that there should have been a wedding without bridesmaids, that I might as well have preached to Joe himself."

Here the old gentleman stopped to laugh; and having done so to his heart's content presently resumed.

"But this is not the best of it, it seems. This is only half the love-making and plotting that have been going forward. We have been walking on mines for the last six months, and they're sprung at last."

"What do you mean!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, turning pale; "no other secret marriage, I hope?"

"No, no," replied old Wardle; "not so bad as that; no."

"What then?" inquired Mr. Pickwick; "am I interested in it?"

"Shall I answer that question, Perker?" said Wardle.

"If you don't commit yourself by doing so, my dear sir."

"Well then, you are," said Wardle.

"How?" asked Mr. Pickwick anxiously. "In what way?"

"Really," replied Wardle, "you're such a fiery sort of young fellow that I am almost afraid to tell you; but, however, if Perker will sit between us to prevent mischief, I'll venture."

Having closed the room door, and fortified himself with another application to Perker's snuff-box, the old gentleman proceeded with his great disclosure in these words.

"The fact is, that my daughter Bella—Bella, who married young Trundle, you know."

"Yes, yes, we know," said Mr. Pickwick impatiently.

"Don't alarm me at the very beginning. My daughter Bella, Emily having gone to bed with a headache after she had read Arabella's letter to me, sat herself down by my side the other evening, and began to talk over this marriage affair. 'Well, pa,' she says, 'what do you think of it?' 'Why, my dear,' I said, 'I suppose it's all very well; I hope it's for the best.' I answered in this way because I was sitting before the fire at the time, drinking my grog rather thoughtfully, and I knew my throwing in an undecided word now and then, would induce her to continue talking. Both my girls are pictures of their dear mother, and as I grow old I like to sit with only them by me; for their voices and looks carry me back to the happiest period of my life, and make me, for the moment, as young as I used to be then, though not quite so light-hearted. 'It's quite a marriage of affection, pa,' said Bella, after a short silence. 'Yes, my dear,' said I, 'but such marriages do not always turn out the happiest.'"

"I question that, mind!" interposed Mr. Pickwick, warmly.

"Very good," responded Wardle, "question anything you like when it's your turn to speak, but don't interrupt me."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Granted," replied Wardle. "'I am sorry to hear you express your opinion against marriages of affection, pa,' said Bella, colouring a little. 'I was wrong; I ought not to have said so, my dear, either,' said I, patting her cheek as kindly as a rough old fellow like me could pat it, 'for your mother's was one, and so was yours.' 'It's not that, I meant, pa,' said Bella. 'The fact is, pa, I wanted to speak to you about Emily.'"

Mr. Pickwick started.

"What's the matter now?" inquired Wardle, stopping in his narrative.

"Nothing," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Pray go on."

"I never could spin out a story," said Wardle abruptly. "It must come out, sooner or later, and it'll save us all a great deal of time if it comes at once. The long and the short of it is, then, that Bella at last mustered up courage to tell me that Emily was very unhappy; that she and your young friend Snodgrass had been in constant correspondence and communication ever since last Christmas; that she had very dutifully made up her mind to run away with him, in

laudable imitation of her old friend and schoolfellow ; but that having some compunctions of conscience on the subject, inasmuch as I had always been rather kindly disposed to both of them, they had thought it better in the first instance to pay me the compliment of asking whether I would have any objection to their being married in the usual matter-of-fact manner. There now, Mr Pickwick, if you can make it convenient to reduce your eyes to their usual size again, and to let me hear what you think we ought to do, I shall feel rather obliged to you !”

The testy manner in which the hearty old gentleman uttered this last sentence was not wholly unwarranted ; for Mr. Pickwick's face had settled down into an expression of blank amazement and perplexity, quite curious to behold.

“Snodgrass ! Since last Christmas !” were the first broken words that issued from the lips of the confounded gentleman.

“Since last Christmas,” replied Wardle ; “that's plain enough, and very bad spectacles we must have worn, not to have discovered it before.”

“I don't understand it,” said Mr. Pickwick, ruminating ; “I really cannot understand it.”

“It's easy enough to understand,” replied the choleric old gentleman. “If you had been a younger man, you would have been in the secret long ago ; and besides,” added Wardle after a moment's hesitation, “the truth is, that, knowing nothing of this matter, I have rather pressed Emily for four or five months past, to receive favourably (if she could ; I would never attempt to force a girl's inclinations) the addresses of a young gentleman down in our neighbourhood. I have no doubt that, girl-like, to enhance her own value and increase the ardour of Mr. Snodgrass, she has represented this matter in very glowing colours, and that they have both arrived at the conclusion that they are a terribly persecuted pair of unfortunates, and have no resource but clandestine matrimony or charcoal. Now the question is, what's to be done ?”

“What have *you* done ?” inquired Mr. Pickwick.

“I !”

“I mean what did you do when your married daughter told you this ?”

“Oh, I made a fool of myself, of course,” rejoined Wardle.

“Just so,” interposed Perker, who had accompanied this dialogue with sundry twitchings of his watch-chain, vin-

dictive rubbings of his nose, and other symptoms of impatience. "That's very natural ; but how ?"

"I went into a great passion and frightened my mother into a fit," said Wardle.

"That was judicious," remarked Perker ; "and what else ?"

"I fretted and fumed all next day, and raised a great disturbance," rejoined the old gentleman. "At last I got tired of rendering myself unpleasant and making everybody miserable ; so I hired a carriage at Muggleton, and, putting my own horses in it, came up to town, under pretence of bringing Emily to see Arabella."

"Miss Wardle is with you, then ?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"To be sure she is," replied Wardle. "She is at Osborne's hotel in the Adelphi at this moment, unless your enterprising friend has run away with her since I came out this morning."

"You are reconciled, then ?" said Perker.

"Not a bit of it," answered Wardle ; "she has been crying and moping ever since, except last night, between tea and supper, when she made a great parade of writing a letter that I pretended to take no notice of."

"You want my advice in this matter, I suppose ?" said Perker, looking from the musing face of Mr. Pickwick to the eager countenance of Wardle, and taking several consecutive pinches of his favourite stimulant.

"I suppose so," said Wardle, looking at Mr. Pickwick.

"Certainly," replied that gentleman.

"Well then," said Perker, rising and pushing his chair back, "my advice is that you both walk away together, or ride away, or get away by some means or other, for I'm tired of you, and just talk this matter over between you. If you have not settled it by the next time I see you, I'll tell you what to do."

"This is satisfactory," said Wardle, hardly knowing whether to smile or be offended.

"Pooh, pooh, my dear sir," returned Perker. "I know you both a great deal better than you know yourselves. You have settled it already, to all intents and purposes."

Thus expressing himself, the little gentleman poked his snuff-box, first into the chest of Mr. Pickwick, and then into the waistcoat of Mr. Wardle, upon which they all three laughed, but especially the two last-named gentlemen, who

at once shook hands again, without any obvious or particular reason.

"You dine with me to-day," said Wardle to Perker, as he showed them out.

"Can't promise, my dear sir, can't promise," replied Perker. "I'll look in, in the evening, at all events."

"I shall expect you at five," said Wardle. "Now, Joe!" And Joe having been at length awakened, the two friends departed in Mr. Wardle's carriage, which in common humanity had a dickey behind for the fat boy, who, if there had been a foot-board instead, would have rolled off and killed himself in his very first nap.

Driving to the George and Vulture, they found that Arabella and her maid had sent for a hackney-coach immediately on the receipt of a short note from Emily announcing her arrival in town, and had proceeded straight to the Adelphi. As Wardle had business to transact in the city, they sent the carriage and the fat boy to his hotel, with the information that he and Mr. Pickwick would return together to dinner at five o'clock.

Charged with this message, the fat boy returned, slumbering as peaceably in his dickey, over the stones, as if it had been a down bed on watch-springs. By some extraordinary miracle he awoke of his own accord, when the coach stopped, and giving himself a good shake to stir up his faculties, went up stairs to execute his commission.

Now, whether the shake had jumbled the fat boy's faculties together, instead of arranging them in proper order, or had roused such a quantity of new ideas within him as to render him oblivious of ordinary forms and ceremonies, or (which is also possible) had proved unsuccessful in preventing his falling asleep as he ascended the stairs, it is an undoubted fact that he walked into the sitting-room without previously knocking at the door; and so beheld a gentleman with his arms clasping his young mistress's waist, sitting very lovingly by her side on a sofa, while Arabella and her pretty hand-maid feigned to be absorbed in looking out of a window at the other end of the room. At sight of this phenomenon, the fat boy uttered an interjection, the ladies a scream, and the gentleman an oath, almost simultaneously.

"Wretched creature, what do you want here?" said the gentleman, who it is needless to say was Mr. Snodgrass.

To this the fat boy, considerably terrified, briefly responded, "Missis."

"What do you want me for?" inquired Emily, turning her head aside, "you stupid creature!"

"Master and Mr. Pickwick is a going to dine here at five," replied the fat boy.

"Leave the room!" said Mr. Snodgrass, glaring upon the bewildered youth.

"No, no, no," added Emily hastily. "Bella, dear, advise me."

Upon this, Emily and Mr. Snodgrass, and Arabella and Mary, crowded into a corner, and conversed earnestly in whispers for some minutes, during which the fat boy dozed.

"Joe," said Arabella, at length, looking round with a most bewitching smile, "how do you do, Joe?"

"Joe," said Emily, "you're a very good boy; I won't forget you, Joe."

"Joe," said Mr. Snodgrass, advancing to the astonished youth, and seizing his hand, "I didn't know you before. There's five shillings for you. Joe!"

"I'll owe you five, Joe," said Arabella, "for old acquaintance sake, you know;" and another most captivating smile was bestowed upon the corpulent intruder.

The fat boy's perception being slow, he looked rather puzzled at first to account for this sudden prepossession in his favour, and stared about him in a very alarming manner. At length his broad face began to show symptoms of a grin of proportionately broad dimensions; and then, thrusting half-a-crown into each of his pockets, and a hand and wrist after it, he burst into a hoarse laugh: being for the first and only time in his existence.

"He understands us, I see," said Arabella.

"He had better have something to eat, immediately," remarked Emily.

The fat boy almost laughed again when he heard this suggestion. Mary, after a little more whispering, tripped forth from the group, and said:

"I am going to dine with you to-day, sir, if you have no objection."

"This way," said the fat boy, eagerly. "There is such a jolly meat pie!"

With these words, the fat boy led the way down stairs; his pretty companion captivating all the waiters and anger-

ing all the chambermaids as she followed him to the eating-room.

There was the meat-pie of which the youth had spoken so feelingly, and there were, moreover, a steak, and a dish of potatoes, and a pot of porter.

"Sit down," said the fat boy. "Oh, my eye, how prime! I am so hungry."

Having apostrophised his eye, in a species of rapture, five or six times, the youth took the head of the little table, and Mary seated herself at the bottom.

"Will you have some of this?" said the fat boy, plunging into the pie up to the very ferules of the knife and fork.

"A little, if you please," replied Mary.

The fat boy assisted Mary to a little, and himself to a great deal, and was just going to begin eating when he suddenly laid down his knife and fork, leant forward in his chair, and letting his hands, with the knife and fork in them, fall on his knees, said, very slowly :

"I say! How nice you look!"

This was said in an admiring manner, and was, so far, gratifying; but still there was enough of the cannibal in the young gentleman's eyes to render the compliment a double one.

"Dear me, Joseph," said Mary, affecting to blush, "what do you mean?"

The fat boy gradually recovering his former position, replied with a heavy sigh, and remaining thoughtful for a few moments, drank a long draught of the porter. Having achieved this feat he sighed again, and applied himself assiduously to the pie.

"What a nice young lady Miss Emily is!" said Mary, after a long silence.

The fat boy had by this time finished the pie. He fixed his eyes on Mary, and replied:

"I knows a nicerer."

"Indeed!" said Mary.

"Yes, indeed!" replied the fat boy, with unwonted vivacity.

"What's her name?" inquired Mary.

"What's yours?"

"Mary."

"So's hers," said the fat boy. "You're her." The boy grinned to add point to the compliment, and put his eyes

into something between a squint and a cast, which there is reason to believe he intended for an ogle.

"You mustn't talk to me in that way," said Mary; "you don't mean it."

"Don't I, though?" replied the fat boy; "I say!"

"Well."

"Are you going to come here regular?"

"No," rejoined Mary, shaking her head, "I'm going away again to-night. Why?"

"Oh!" said the fat boy in a tone of strong feeling; "how we should have enjoyed ourselves at meals, if you had been!"

"I might come here sometimes, perhaps, to see you," said Mary, plaiting the table-cloth in assumed coyness, "if you would do me a favour."

The fat boy looked from the pie-dish to the steak, as if he thought a favour must be in a manner connected with something to eat; and then took out one of the half-crowns and glanced at it nervously.

"Don't you understand me?" said Mary, looking slyly in his fat face.

Again he looked at the half-crown, and said faintly, "No."

"The ladies want you not to say anything to the old gentleman about the young gentleman having been up stairs; and I want you too."

"Is that all?" said the fat boy, evidently very much relieved as he pocketed the half-crown again. "Of course I ain't a going to."

"You see," said Mary, "Mr. Snodgrass is very fond of Miss Emily, and Miss Emily's very fond of him, and if you were to tell about it, the old gentleman would carry you all away miles into the country, where you'd see nobody."

"No, no, I won't tell," said the fat boy, stoutly.

"That's a dear," said Mary. "Now it's time I went up stairs, and got my lady ready for dinner."

"Don't go yet," urged the fat boy.

"I must," replied Mary. "Good bye, for the present."

The fat boy, with elephantine playfulness, stretched out his arms to ravish a kiss; but as it required no great agility to elude him, his fair enslaver had vanished before he closed them again; upon which the apathetic youth ate a pound or so of steak with a sentimental countenance, and fell fast asleep.



MARY AND THE FAT BOY

There was so much to say up stairs, and there were so many plans to concert for elopement and matrimony in the event of old Wardle continuing to be cruel, that it wanted only half an hour of dinner when Mr. Snodgrass took his final adieu. The ladies ran to Emily's bedroom to dress, and the lover taking up his hat, walked out of the room. He had scarcely got outside the door, when he heard Wardle's voice talking loudly, and looking over the banisters, beheld him, followed by some other gentlemen, coming straight up stairs. Knowing nothing of the house, Mr. Snodgrass in his confusion stepped hastily back into the room he had just quitted, and passing from thence into an inner apartment (Mr. Wardle's bed-chamber), closed the door softly, just as the persons he had caught a glimpse of, entered the sitting-room. These were Mr. Wardle, Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, and Mr. Benjamin Allen, whom he had no difficulty in recognising by their voices.

"Very lucky I had the presence of mind to avoid them," thought Mr. Snodgrass with a smile, and walking on tiptoe to another door near the bedside; "this opens into the same passage, and I can walk, quietly and comfortably, away."

There was only one obstacle to his walking quietly and comfortably away, which was that the door was locked and the key gone.

"Let us have some of your best wine to-day, waiter," said old Wardle, rubbing his hands.

"You shall have some of the very best, sir," replied the waiter.

"Let the ladies know we have come in."

"Yes, sir."

Devoutly and ardently did Mr. Snodgrass wish that the ladies could know *he* had come in. He ventured once to whisper "Waiter!" through the keyhole, but as the probability of the wrong waiter coming to his relief, flashed upon his mind, together with a sense of the strong resemblance between his own situation and that in which another gentleman had been recently found in a neighbouring hotel (an account of whose misfortunes had appeared under the head of "Police" in that morning's paper), he sat himself on a portmanteau, and trembled violently.

"We won't wait a minute for Perker," said Wardle, looking at his watch; "he is always exact. He will be

here, in time, if he means to come; and if he does not, it's of no use waiting. Ha! Arabella!"

"My sister!" exclaimed Mr. Benjamin Allen, folding her in a most romantic embrace.

"Oh, Ben, dear, how you do smell of tobacco," said Arabella, rather overcome by this mark of affection.

"Do I?" said Mr. Benjamin Allen, "Do I, Bella? Well, perhaps I do."

Perhaps he did; having just left a pleasant little smoking party of twelve medical students, in a small back parlour with a large fire.

"But I am delighted to see you," said Mr. Ben Allen. "Bless you, Bella!"

"There," said Arabella, bending forward to kiss her brother; "don't take hold of me again, Ben dear, because you tumble me so."

At this point of the reconciliation, Mr. Ben Allen allowed his feelings and the cigars and porter to overcome him, and looked round upon the beholders with damp spectacles.

"Is nothing to be said to me?" cried Wardle with open arms.

"A great deal," whispered Arabella, as she received the old gentleman's hearty caress and congratulation. "You are a hard-hearted, unfeeling, cruel, monster!"

"You are a little rebel," replied Wardle, in the same tone, "and I am afraid I shall be obliged to forbid you the house. People like you, who get married in spite of everybody, ought not to be let loose on society. But come!" added the old gentleman aloud, "Here's the dinner; you shall sit by me. Joe; why, damn the boy, he's awake!"

To the great distress of his master, the fat boy was indeed in a state of remarkable vigilance; his eyes being wide open, and looking as if they intended to remain so. There was an alacrity in his manner, too, which was equally unaccountable; every time his eyes met those of Emily or Arabella, he smirked and grinned; once, Wardle could have sworn he saw him wink.

This alteration in the fat boy's demeanour, originated in his increased sense of his own importance, and the dignity he acquired from having been taken into the confidence of the young ladies; and the smirks, and grins, and winks, were so many condescending assurances that they might depend upon his fidelity. As these tokens were rather calculated to

awaken suspicion than allay it, and were somewhat embarrassing besides, they were occasionally answered by a frown or shake of the head from Arabella, which the fat boy considering as hints to be on his guard, expressed his perfect understanding of, by smirking, grinning, and winking, with redoubled assiduity.

"Joe," said Mr. Wardle, after an unsuccessful search in all his pockets, "is my snuff-box on the sofa?"

"No, sir," replied the fat boy.

"Oh, I recollect; I left it on my dressing-table this morning," said Wardle. "Run into the next room and fetch it."

The fat boy went into the next room; and having been absent about a minute, returned with the snuff-box, and the palest face that ever a fat boy wore.

"What's the matter with the boy!" exclaimed Wardle.

"Nothen's the matter with me," replied Joe, nervously.

"Have you been seeing any spirits?" inquired the old gentleman.

"Or taking any?" added Ben Allen.

"I think you're right," whispered Wardle across the table. "He is intoxicated, I'm sure."

"Ben Allen replied that he thought he was; and as that gentleman had seen a vast deal of the disease in question, Wardle was confirmed in an impression which had been hovering about his mind for half an hour, and at once arrived at the conclusion that the fat boy was drunk.

"Just keep your eye upon him for a few minutes," murmured Wardle. "We shall soon find out whether he is or not."

The unfortunate youth had only interchanged a dozen words with Mr. Snodgrass: that gentleman having implored him to make a private appeal to some friend to release him, and then pushed him out with the snuff-box, lest his prolonged absence should lead to a discovery. He ruminated a little with a most disturbed expression of face, and left the room in search of Mary.

But Mary had gone home after dressing her mistress, and the fat boy came back again more disturbed than before.

Wardle and Mr. Ben Allen exchanged glances.

"Joe!" said Wardle.

"Yes, sir."

"What did you go away for?"

The fat boy looked hopelessly in the face of everybody at table, and stammered out, that he didn't know.

"Oh," said Wardle, "you don't know, eh? Take this cheese to Mr. Pickwick."

Now, Mr. Pickwick being in the very best health and spirits, had been making himself perfectly delightful all dinner-time, and was at this moment engaged in an energetic conversation with Emily and Mr. Winkle: bowing his head, courteously, in the emphasis of his discourse, gently waving his left hand to lend force to his observations, and all glowing with placid smiles. He took a piece of cheese from the plate, and was on the point of turning round to renew the conversation, when the fat boy, stooping so as to bring his head on a level with that of Mr. Pickwick, pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and made the most horrible and hideous face that was ever seen out of a Christmas pantomime.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pickwick, starting, "what a very—eh?" He stopped, for the fat boy had drawn himself up, and was, or pretended to be, fast asleep.

"What's the matter?" inquired Wardle.

"This is such an extremely singular lad!" replied Mr. Pickwick, looking uneasily at the boy. "It seems an odd thing to say, but upon my word I am afraid that, at times, he is a little deranged."

"Oh! Mr. Pickwick, pray don't say so," cried Emily and Arabella, both at once.

"I am not certain, of course," said Mr. Pickwick, amidst profound silence, and looks of general dismay; "but his manner to me this moment was really very alarming. Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, suddenly jumping up with a short scream. "I beg your pardon, ladies, but at that moment he ran some sharp instrument into my leg. Really he is not safe."

"He's drunk," roared old Wardle, passionately. "Ring the bell! Call the waiters! He's drunk."

"I ain't," said the fat boy, falling on his knees as his master seized him by the collar. "I ain't drunk."

"Then you're mad; that's worse. Call the waiters," said the old gentleman.

"I ain't mad; I'm sensible," rejoined the fat boy, beginning to cry.

"Then, what the devil do you run sharp instruments into Mr. Pickwick's legs for?" inquired Wardle, angrily.

"He wouldn't look at me," replied the boy. "I wanted to speak to him."

"What did you want to say?" asked half a dozen voices at once.

"The fat boy gasped, looked at the bedroom door, gasped again, and wiped two tears away with the knuckle of each of his forefingers.

"What did you want to say?" demanded Wardle, shaking him.

"Stop!" said Mr. Pickwick; "allow me. What did you wish to communicate to me my poor boy?"

"I want to whisper to you," replied the fat boy.

"You want to bite his ear off, I suppose," said Wardle. "Don't come near him; he's vicious; ring the bell, and let him be taken down stairs."

Just as Mr. Winkle caught the bell-rope in his hand, it was arrested by a general expression of astonishment; the captive lover, his face burning with confusion, suddenly walked in from the bedroom, and made a comprehensive bow to the company.

"Hallo!" cried Wardle, releasing the fat boy's collar, and staggering back, "What's this!"

"I have been concealed in the next room, sir, since you returned," explained Mr. Snodgrass.

"Emily, my girl," said Wardle, reproachfully, "I detest meanness and deceit; this is unjustifiable and indelicate in the highest degree. I don't deserve this at your hands, Emily, indeed!"

"Dear papa," said Emily, "Arabella knows—everybody here knows—Joe knows—that I was no party to this concealment. Augustus, for Heaven's sake, explain it!"

Mr. Snodgrass, who had only waited for a hearing, at once recounted how he had been placed in his then distressing predicament; how the fear of giving rise to domestic dissensions had alone prompted him to avoid Mr. Wardle on his entrance; how he merely meant to depart by another door, but, finding it locked, had been compelled to stay against his will. It was a painful situation to be placed in; but he now regretted it the less, inasmuch as it afforded him an opportunity of acknowledging, before their mutual friends, that he loved Mr. Wardle's daughter, deeply and sincerely; that he

was proud to avow that the feeling was mutual : and that if thousands of miles were placed between them, or oceans rolled their waters, he could never for an instant forget those happy days, when first—and so on.

Having delivered himself to this effect, Mr. Snodgrass bowed again, looked into the crown of his hat, and stepped towards the door.

“Stop!” shouted Wardle. “Why, in the name of all that’s——”

“Inflammable,” mildly suggested Mr. Pickwick, who thought something worse was coming.

“Well—that’s inflammable,” said Wardle, adopting the substitute; “couldn’t you say all this to me in the first instance?”

“Or confide in me?” added Mr. Pickwick.

“Dear, dear,” said Arabella, taking up the defence, “what is the use of asking all that now, especially when you know you had set your covetous old heart on a richer son-in-law, and are so wild and fierce besides, that everybody is afraid of you, except me. Shake hands with him, and order him some dinner, for goodness gracious sake, for he looks half-starved; and pray have your wine up at once, for you’ll not be tolerable until you have taken two bottles at least.”

The worthy old gentleman pulled Arabella’s ear, kissed her without the smallest scruple, kissed his daughter also with great affection, and shook Mr. Snodgrass warmly by the hand.

“She is right on one point at all events,” said the old gentleman, cheerfully. “Ring for the wine!”

The wine came, and Perker came up stairs at the same moment. Mr. Snodgrass had dinner at a side table, and, when he had despatched it, drew his chair next Emily, without the smallest opposition on the old gentleman’s part.

The evening was excellent. Little Mr. Perker came out wonderfully, told various comic stories, and sang a serious song which was almost as funny as the anecdotes. Arabella was very charming, Mr. Wardle very jovial, Mr. Pickwick very harmonious, Mr. Ben Allen very uproarious, the lovers very silent, Mr. Winkle very talkative, and all of them very happy.

CHAPTER LVI

AN IMPORTANT CONFERENCE TAKES PLACE BETWEEN MR. PICKWICK AND SAMUEL WELLER, AT WHICH HIS PARENT ASSISTS. AN OLD GENTLEMAN IN A SNUFF-COLOURED SUIT ARRIVES UNEXPECTEDLY

MR. PICKWICK was sitting alone, musing over many things, and thinking among other considerations how he could best provide for the young couple whose present unsettled condition was matter of constant regret and anxiety to him. when Mary stepped lightly into the room, and, advancing to the table, said, rather hastily:

"Oh, if you please, sir, Samuel is down stairs, and he says may his father see you?"

"Surely," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Thank you, sir," said Mary, tripping towards the door again.

"Sam has not been here long, has he?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, no, sir," replied Mary eagerly. "He has only just come home. He is not going to ask you for any more leave, sir, he says."

Mary might have been conscious that she had communicated this last intelligence with more warmth than seemed actually necessary, or she might have observed the good-humoured smile with which Mr. Pickwick regarded her, when she had finished speaking. She certainly held down her head, and examined the corner of a very smart little apron, with more closeness than there appeared any absolute occasion for.

"Tell them they can come up at once, by all means," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mary, apparently much relieved, hurried away with her message.

Mr. Pickwick took two or three turns up and down the

room ; and rubbing his chin with his left hand as he did so, appeared lost in thought.

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick at length, in a kind but somewhat melancholy tone, "it is the best way in which I could reward him for his attachment and fidelity ; let it be so, in Heaven's name. It is the fate of a lonely old man, that those about him should form new and different attachments and leave him. I have no right to expect that it should be otherwise with me. No, no," added Mr. Pickwick more cheerfully, "it would be selfish and ungrateful. I ought to be happy to have an opportunity of providing for him so well. I am. Of course I am."

Mr. Pickwick had been so absorbed in these reflections, that a knock at the door was three or four times repeated before he heard it. Hastily seating himself, and calling up his accustomed pleasant looks, he gave the required permission, and Sam Weller entered, followed by his father.

"Glad to see you back again, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "How do you do, Mr. Weller?"

"Wery hearty, thankee, sir," replied the widower ; "hope I see *you* well, sir."

"Quite, I thank you," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"I wanted to have a little bit o' conversation with you, sir," said Mr. Weller, "if you could spare me five minits or so, sir."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Sam, give your father a chair."

"Thankee, Samivel, I've got a cheer here," said Mr. Weller, bringing one forward as he spoke ; "uncommon fine day it's been, sir," added the old gentleman, laying his hat on the floor as he sat himself down.

"Remarkably so indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Very seasonable."

"Seasonablest veather I ever see, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller. Here, the old gentleman was seized with a violent fit of coughing, which, being terminated, he nodded his head and winked and made several supplicatory and threatening gestures to his son, all of which Sam Weller steadily abstained from seeing.

Mr. Pickwick, perceiving that there was some embarrassment on the old gentleman's part, affected to be engaged in cutting the leaves of a book that lay beside him, and waited

patiently until Mr. Weller should arrive at the object of his visit.

"I never see sich a aggerawatin' boy as you are, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, looking indignantly at his son; "never in all my born days."

"What is he doing, Mr. Weller?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He von't begin, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller; "he knows I ain't ekal to ex-pressin' m'self ven there's anythin' partickler to be done, and yet he'll stand and see me a settin' here takin' up your walable time, and makin' a reg'lar spectacle o' myself, rayther than help me out with a syllable. It ain't filial conduct, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, wiping his forehead; "wery far from it."

"You said you'd speak," replied Sam: "how should I know you wos done up at the wery beginnin'?"

"You might ha' seen I waen't able to start," rejoined his father; "I'm on the wrong side of the road, and backin' into the palins, and all manner of unpleasantness, and yet you von't put out a hand to help me. I'm ashamed on you, Samivel."

"The fact is, sir," said Sam, with a slight bow, "the gov'ner's been a drawin' his money."

"Wery good, Samivel, wery good," said Mr. Weller, nodding his head with a satisfied air, "I didn't mean to speak harsh to you, Sammy. Wery good. That's the way to begin. Come to the pint at once. Wery good indeed, Samivel."

Mr. Weller nodded his head an extraordinary number of times, in the excess of his gratification, and waited in a listening attitude for Sam to resume his statement.

"You may sit down, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, apprehending that the interview was likely to prove rather longer than he had expected.

Sam bowed again and sat down; his father looking round, he continued,

"The gov'ner, sir, has drawn out five hundred and thirty pound."

"Reduced counsels," interposed Mr. Weller, senior, in an undertone.

"It don't much matter vether it's reduced counsels, or wot not," said Sam; "five hundred and thirty pound is the sum, ain't it?"

"All right, Samivel," replied Mr. Weller.

"To vich sum, he has added for the house and b'sness—

"Lease, good-vill, stock, and fixters," interposed Mr. Weller.

—"As much as makes it," continued Sam, "altogether, eleven hundred and eighty pound."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pickwick. "I am delighted to hear it. I congratulate you, Mr. Weller, on having done so well."

"Vait a minit, sir," said Mr. Weller, raising his hand in a deprecatory manner. "Get on, Samivel."

"This here money," said Sam, with a little hesitation, "he's anxious to put someveres, vere he knows it'll be safe, and I'm wery anxious too, for if he keeps it, he'll go a lendin' it to somebody, or investin' property in horses, or droppin' his pocket-book down a airy, or makin' a Egyptian mummy of his-self in some vay or another."

"Wery good, Samivel," observed Mr. Weller, in as complacent a manner as if Sam had been passing the highest eulogiums on his prudence and foresight. "Wery good."

"For vich reasons," continued Sam, plucking nervously at the brim of his hat; "for vich reasons, he's drawd it out to-day, and come here vith me to say, leastvays to offer, or in other vords to—"

"—To say this here," said the elder Mr. Weller, impatiently, "that it ain't o' no use to me. I'm a goin' to vork a coach reg'lar, and ha'n't got noveres to keep it in, unless I vos to pay the guard for takin' care on it, or to put it in vun o' the coach pockets, vich 'ud be a temptation to the insides. If you'll take care on it for me, sir, I shall be wery much obliged to you. P'raps," said Mr. Weller, walking up to Mr. Pickwick and whispering in his ear, "p'raps it'll go a little vay towards the expenses o' that 'ere conviction. All I say is, just you keep it till I ask you for it again." With these words, Mr. Weller placed the pocket-book in Mr. Pickwick's hands, caught up his hat, and ran out of the room with a celerity scarcely to be expected from so corpulent a subject.

"Stop him, Sam!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, earnestly. "Overtake him; bring him back instantly! Mr. Weller—here—come back!"

Sam saw that his master's injunctions were not to be disobeyed; and catching his father by the arm as he was descending the stairs, dragged him back by main force.

"My good friend," said Mr. Pickwick, taking the old man by the hand; "your honest confidence overpowers me."

"I don't see no occasion for nothin' o' the kind sir," replied Mr. Weller, obstinately.

"I assure you, my good friend, I have more money than I can ever need; far more than a man at my age can ever live to spend," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No man knows how much he can spend, till he tries," observed Mr. Weller.

"Perhaps not," replied Mr. Pickwick; "but as I have no intention of trying any such experiments, I am not likely to come to want. I must beg you to take this back, Mr. Weller."

"Wery well," said Mr. Weller with a discontented look. "Mark my vords, Sammy. I'll do somethin' desperate with this here property; somethin' desperate!"

"You'd better not," replied Sam.

Mr. Weller reflected for a short time, and then, buttoning up his coat with great determination, said:

"I'll keep a pike."

"Wot!" exclaimed Sam.

"A pike," rejoined Mr. Weller, through his set teeth: "I'll keep a pike. Say good bye to your father, Samivel. I dewote the remainder o' my days to a pike."

This threat was such an awful one, and Mr. Weller besides appearing fully resolved to carry it into execution, seemed so deeply mortified by Mr. Pickwick's refusal, that that gentleman, after a short reflection, said:

"Well, well, Mr. Weller. I will keep the money. I can do more good with it, perhaps, than you can."

"Just the wery thing, to be sure," said Mr. Weller, brightening up; "o' course you can, sir."

"Say no more about it," said Mr. Pickwick, locking the pocket-book in his desk; "I am heartily obliged to you, my good friend. Now sit down again. I want to ask your advice."

The internal laughter occasioned by the triumphant success of his visit, which had convulsed not only Mr. Weller's face, but his arms, legs, and body also, during the locking up of the pocket-book, suddenly gave place to the most dignified gravity as he heard these words.

"Wait outside a few minutes, Sam, will you?" said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam immediately withdrew.

Mr. Weller looked uncommonly wise and very much

amazed, when Mr. Pickwick opened the discourse by saying:

"You are not an advocate for matrimony, I think, Mr. Weller?"

Mr. Weller shook his head. He was wholly unable to speak; vague thoughts of some wicked widow having been successful in her designs on Mr. Pickwick, choked his utterance.

"Did you happen to see a young girl downstairs when you came in just now with your son?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes. I see a young gal," replied Mr. Weller, shortly.

"What did you think of her, now? Candidly, Mr. Weller, what did you think of her?"

"I thought she was wery plump, and vell made," said Mr. Weller, with a critical air.

"So she is," said Mr. Pickwick, "so she is. What did you think of her manners, from what you saw of her?"

"Wery pleasant," rejoined Mr. Weller. "Wery pleasant and conformable."

The precise meaning which Mr. Weller attached to this last-mentioned adjective, did not appear; but, as it was evident from the tone in which he used it that it was a favourable expression, Mr. Pickwick was as well satisfied as if he had been thoroughly enlightened on the subject.

"I take a great interest in her, Mr. Weller," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Weller coughed.

"I mean an interest in her doing well," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "a desire that she may be comfortable and prosperous. You understand?"

"Wery clearly," replied Mr. Weller, who understood nothing yet.

"That young person," said Mr. Pickwick, "is attached to your son."

"To Samivel Veller!" exclaimed the parent.

"Yes," said Pickwick.

"It's nat'ral," said Mr. Weller, after some consideration, "nat'ral, but rayther alarmin'. Sammy must be careful."

"How do you mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Wery careful that he don't say nothin' to her," responded Mr. Weller. "Wery careful that he ain't led away, in a innocent moment, to say anythink as may lead to a con-

wiction for breach. You're never safe with 'em, Mr. Pickwick, ven they vunce has designs on you ; there's no knowin' vere to have 'em ; and vile you're a-considering of it, they have you. I was married fust, that vay myself, sir, and Sammy wos the consekens o' the manooover."

"You give me no great encouragement to conclude what I have to say," observed Mr. Pickwick, "but I had better do so at once. This young person is not only attached to your son, Mr. Weller, but your son is attached to her."

"Vell," said Mr. Weller, "this here's a pretty sort o' thing to come to a father's ears, this is!"

"I have observed them on several occasions," said Mr. Pickwick, making no comment on Mr. Weller's last remark ; "and entertain no doubt at all about it. Supposing I were desirous of establishing them comfortably as man and wife in some little business or situation, where they might hope to obtain a decent living, what should you think of it, Mr. Weller?"

At first, Mr. Weller received, with wry faces, a proposition involving the marriage of anybody in whom he took an interest ; but, as Mr. Pickwick argued the point with him, and laid great stress on the fact that Mary was not a widow, he gradually became more tractable. Mr. Pickwick had great influence over him, and he had been much struck with Mary's appearance ; having, in fact, bestowed several very unfatherly winks upon her, already. At length he said that it was not for him to oppose Mr. Pickwick's inclination, and that he would be very happy to yield to his advice ; upon which, Mr. Pickwick joyfully took him at his word, and called Sam back into the room.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, clearing his throat, "your father and I have been having some conversation about you."

"About you, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, in a patronising and impressive voice.

"I am not so blind, Sam, as not to have seen, a long time since, that you entertain something more than a friendly feeling towards Mrs. Winkle's maid," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You hear this, Samivel?" said Mr. Weller in the same judicial form of speech as before.

"I hope, sir," said Sam, addressing his master : "I hope there's no harm in a young man takin' notice of a young 'ooman as is undeniably good-looking and well-conducted."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not by no means," acquiesced Mr. Weller, affably but magisterially.

"So far from thinking there is anything wrong, in conduct so natural," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "it is my wish to assist and promote your wishes in this respect. With this view, I have had a little conversation with your father; and finding that he is of my opinion——"

"The lady not bein' a widder," interposed Mr. Weller in explanation.

"The lady not being a widow," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling. "I wish to free you from the restraint which your present position imposes upon you, and to mark my sense of your fidelity and many excellent qualities, by enabling you to marry this girl at once, and to earn an independent livelihood for yourself and family. I shall be proud, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, whose voice had faltered a little hitherto, but now resumed its customary tone, "proud and happy to make your future prospects in life, my grateful and peculiar care."

There was a profound silence for a short time, and then Sam said, in a low husky sort of voice, but firmly withal:

"I'm very much obliged to you for your goodness, sir, as is only like yourself; but it can't be done."

"Can't be done!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick in astonishment.

"Samivel!" said Mr. Weller, with dignity.

"I say it can't be done," repeated Sam in a louder key. "Wot's to become of you, sir?"

"My good fellow," replied Mr. Pickwick, "the recent changes among my friends will alter my mode of life in future, entirely; besides, I am growing older, and want repose and quiet. My rambles, Sam, are over."

"How do I know that 'ere, sir?" argued Sam. "You think so now! S'pose you wos to change your mind, vich is not unlikely, for you've the spirit o' five-and-tventy in you still, what 'ud become on you vithout me? It can't be done, sir, it can't be done."

"Wery good, Samivel, there's a good deal in that," said Mr. Weller, encouragingly.

"I speak after long deliberation, Sam, and with the certainty that I shall keep my word," said Mr. Pickwick, shaking his head. "New scenes have closed upon me; my rambles are at an end."

"Very good," rejoined Sam. "Then, that's the very best reason why you should always have somebody by you as understands you, to keep you up and make you comfortable. If you want a more polished sort o' feller, vell and good, have him; but vages or no vages, notice or no notice, board or no board, lodgin' or no lodgin', Sam Veller, as you took from the old inn in the Borough, sticks by you, come what come may; and let ev'rythin' and ev'rybody do their very fiercest, nothin' shall ever perwent it!"

At the close of this declaration, which Sam made with great emotion, the elder Mr. Weller rose from his chair, and, forgetting all considerations of time, place, or propriety, waved his hat above his head, and gave three vehement cheers.

"My good fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, when Mr. Weller had sat down again, rather awashed at his own enthusiasm, "you are bound to consider the young woman also."

"I do consider the young 'ooman, sir," said Sam. "I have considered the young 'ooman. I've spoke to her. I've told her how I'm sitivated; she's ready to wait till I'm ready, and I believe she vill. If she don't, she's not the young 'ooman I take her for, and I give her up with readiness. You've know'd me afore, sir. My mind's made up, and nothin' can ever alter it."

Who could combat this resolution? Not Mr. Pickwick. He derived, at that moment, more pride and luxury of feeling from the disinterested attachment of his humble friends, than ten thousand protestations from the greatest men living could have awakened in his heart.

While this conversation was passing in Mr. Pickwick's room, a little old gentleman in a suit of snuff-coloured clothes, followed by a porter carrying a small portmanteau, presented himself below; and after securing a bed for the night, inquired of the waiter whether one Mrs. Winkle was staying there, to which question the waiter, of course, responded in the affirmative.

"Is she alone?" inquired the little old gentleman.

"I believe she is, sir," replied the waiter; "I can call her own maid, sir, if you——"

"No, I don't want her," said the old gentleman quickly. "Show me to her room without announcing me."

"Eh, sir?" said the waiter.

"Are you deaf?" inquired the little old gentleman.

"No, sir."

"Then listen, if you please. Can you hear me now?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's well. Show me to Mrs. Winkle's room, without announcing me."

As the little old gentleman uttered this command, he slipped five shillings into the waiter's hand, and looked steadily at him.

"Really, sir," said the waiter, "I don't know, sir, whether —"

"Ah! you'll do it, I see," said the little old gentleman. "You had better do it at once. It will save time."

There was something so very cool and collected in the gentleman's manner, that the waiter put the five shillings in his pocket, and led him up stairs without another word.

"This is the room, is it?" said the gentleman. "You may go."

The waiter complied, wondering much who the gentleman could be, and what he wanted; the little old gentleman waiting till he was out of sight, tapped at the door.

"Come in," said Arabella.

"Um, a pretty voice at any rate," murmured the little old gentleman; "but that's nothing." As he said this, he opened the door and walked in. Arabella, who was sitting at work, rose on beholding a stranger—a little confused—but by no means ungracefully so.

"Pray don't rise, ma'am," said the unknown, walking in, and closing the door after him. "Mrs. Winkle, I believe?"

Arabella inclined her head.

"Mrs. Nathaniel Winkle, who married the son of the old man at Birmingham?" said the stranger, eyeing Arabella with visible curiosity.

Again, Arabella inclined her head, and looked uneasily round, as if uncertain whether to call for assistance.

"I surprise you, I see, ma'am," said the old gentleman.

"Rather, I confess," replied Arabella, wondering more and more.

"I'll take a chair, if you'll allow me, ma'am," said the stranger.

He took one; and drawing a spectacle-case from his pocket, leisurely pulled out a pair of spectacles, which he adjusted on his nose.

"You don't know me, ma'am?" he said, looking so intently at Arabella that she began to feel alarmed.

"No, sir," she replied timidly.

"No," said the gentleman, nursing his left leg; "I don't know how you should. You know my name, though, ma'am."

"Do I?" said Arabella, trembling, though she scarcely knew why. "May I ask what it is?"

"Presently, ma'am, presently," said the stranger, not having yet removed his eyes from her countenance. "You have been recently married, ma'am?"

"I have," replied Arabella, in a scarcely audible tone, laying aside her work, and becoming greatly agitated as a thought, that had occurred to her before, struck more forcibly upon her mind.

"Without having represented to your husband the propriety of first consulting his father, on whom he is dependent, I think?" said the stranger.

Arabella applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Without an endeavour, even, to ascertain, by some indirect appeal, what were the old man's sentiments on a point in which he would naturally feel much interested?" said the stranger.

"I cannot deny it, sir," said Arabella.

"And without having sufficient property of your own to afford your husband any permanent assistance in exchange for the worldly advantages which you knew he would have gained if he had married agreeably to his father's wishes?" said the old gentleman. "This is what boys and girls call disinterested affection, till they have boys and girls of their own, and then they see it in a rougher and very different light!"

Arabella's tears flowed fast, as she pleaded in extenuation that she was young and inexperienced; that her attachment had alone induced her to take the step to which she had resorted; and that she had been deprived of the counsel and guidance of her parents almost from infancy.

"It was wrong," said the old gentleman in a milder tone. "very wrong. It was foolish, romantic, unbusiness-like."

"It was my fault; all my fault, sir," replied poor Arabella, weeping.

"Nonsense," said the old gentleman; "it was not your fault that he fell in love with you, I suppose? Yes it was

though," said the old gentleman, looking rather slyly at Arabella. "It was your fault. He couldn't help it."

This little compliment, or the little gentleman's odd way of paying it, or his altered manner—so much kinder than it was, at first—or all three together, forced a smile from Arabella in the midst of her tears.

"Where's your husband?" inquired the old gentleman, abruptly; stopping a smile which was just coming over his own face.

"I expect him every instant, sir," said Arabella. "I persuaded him to take a walk this morning. He is very low and wretched at not having heard from his father."

"Low, is he?" said the old gentleman. "Serve him right!"

"He feels it on my account, I am afraid," said Arabella; "and indeed, sir, I feel it deeply on his. I have been the sole means of bringing him to his present condition."

"Don't mind it on his account, my dear," said the old gentleman. "It serves him right. I am glad of it—actually glad of it, as far as he is concerned."

The words were scarcely out of the old gentleman's lips, when footsteps were heard ascending the stairs, which he and Arabella seemed both to recognise at the same moment. The little gentleman turned pale, and making a strong effort to appear composed, stood up, as Mr. Winkle entered the room.

"Father!" cried Mr. Winkle, recoiling in amazement.

"Yes, sir," replied the little old gentleman. "Well, sir, what have you got to say to me?"

Mr. Winkle remained silent.

"You are ashamed of yourself, I hope, sir?" said the old gentleman.

Still Mr. Winkle said nothing.

"Are you ashamed of yourself, sir, or are you not?" inquired the old gentleman.

"No, sir," replied Mr. Winkle, drawing Arabella's arm through his. "I am not ashamed of myself, or of my wife either."

"Upon my word!" cried the old gentleman, ironically.

"I am very sorry to have done anything which has lessened your affection for me, sir," said Mr. Winkle; "but I will say, at the same time, that I have no reason to be ashamed of having this lady for my wife, nor you of having her for a daughter."

"Give me your hand, Nat," said the old gentleman in an altered voice. "Kiss me, my love. You *are* a very charming little daughter-in-law after all!"

In a few minutes' time Mr. Winkle went in search of Mr. Pickwick, and returning with that gentleman, presented him to his father, whereupon they shook hands for five minutes incessantly.

"Mr. Pickwick, I thank you most heartily for all your kindness to my son," said old Mr. Winkle, in a bluff straightforward way. "I am a hasty fellow, and when I saw you last, I was vexed and taken by surprise. I have judged for myself now, and am more than satisfied. Shall I make any more apologies, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Not one," replied that gentleman. "You have done the only thing wanting to complete my happiness."

Hereupon, there was another shaking of hands for five minutes longer, accompanied by a great number of complimentary speeches, which, besides being complimentary, had the additional and very novel recommendation of being sincere.

Sam had dutifully seen his father to the Belle Sauvage, when, on returning, he encountered the fat boy in the court, who had been charged with the delivery of a note from Emily Wardle.

"I say," said Joe, who was unusually loquacious, "what a pretty girl Mary is, isn't she? I am *so* fond of her, I am!"

Mr. Weller made no verbal remark in reply; but eyeing the fat boy for a moment, quite transfixed at his presumption, led him by the collar to the corner, and dismissed him with a harmless but ceremonious kick. After which, he walked home, whistling.

CHAPTER LVII

IN WHICH THE PICKWICK CLUB IS FINALLY DISSOLVED,
AND EVERYTHING CONCLUDED TO THE SATISFACTION
OF EVERYBODY

For a whole week after the happy arrival of Mr. Winkle from Birmingham, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller were from home all day long, only returning just in time for dinner, and then wearing an air of mystery and importance quite foreign to their natures. It was evident that very grave and eventful proceedings were on foot ; but various surmises were afloat, respecting their precise character. Some (among whom was Mr. Tupman) were disposed to think that Mr. Pickwick contemplated a matrimonial alliance ; but this idea the ladies most strenuously repudiated. Others, rather inclined to the belief that he had projected some distant tour, and was at present occupied in effecting the preliminary arrangements ; but this again was stoutly denied by Sam himself, who had unequivocally stated when cross-examined by Mary that no new journeys were to be undertaken. At length, when the brains of the whole party had been racked for six long days, by unavailing speculation, it was unanimously resolved that Mr. Pickwick should be called upon to explain his conduct, and to state distinctly why he had thus absented himself from the society of his admiring friends.

With this view, Mr. Wardle invited the full circle to dinner at the Adelphi ; and, the decanters having been twice sent round, opened the business.

"We are all anxious to know," said the old gentleman, "what we have done to offend you, and to induce you to desert us and devote yourself to these solitary walks."

"Are you ?" said Mr. Pickwick. "It is singular enough that I had intended to volunteer a full explanation this very day ; so, if you will give me another glass of wine, I will satisfy your curiosity."

The decanters passed from hand to hand with unwonted briskness, and Mr. Pickwick looking round on the faces of his friends, with a cheerful smile, proceeded :

"All the changes that have taken place among us, said

Mr. Pickwick, "I mean the marriage that *has* taken place, and the marriage that *will* take place, with the changes they involve, rendered it necessary for me to think, soberly and at once, upon my future plans. I determined on retiring to some quiet pretty neighbourhood in the vicinity of London; I saw a house which exactly suited my fancy; I have taken it and furnished it. It is fully prepared for my reception, and I intend entering upon it at once, trusting that I may yet live to spend many quiet years in peaceful retirement, cheered through life by the society of my friends, and followed in death by their affectionate remembrance."

Here Mr. Pickwick paused, and a low murmur ran round the table.

"The house I have taken" said Mr. Pickwick, "is at Dulwich. It has a large garden, and is situated in one of the most pleasant spots near London. It has been fitted up with every attention to substantial comfort; perhaps to a little elegance besides; but of that you shall judge for yourselves. Sam accompanies me there. I have engaged, on Perker's representation, a housekeeper—a very old one—and such other servants as she thinks I shall require. I propose to consecrate this little retreat, by having a ceremony in which I take a great interest, performed there. I wish, if my friend Wardle entertains no objection, that his daughter should be married from my new house, on the day I take possession of it. The happiness of young people," said Mr. Pickwick, a little moved, "has ever been the chief pleasure of my life. It will warm my heart to witness the happiness of those friends who are dearest to me, beneath my own roof."

Mr. Pickwick paused again: Emily and Arabella sobbed audibly.

"I have communicated, both personally and by letter, with the club," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "acquainting them with my intention. During our long absence, it had suffered much from internal dissensions; and the withdrawal of my name, coupled with this and other circumstances, has occasioned its dissolution. The Pickwick Club exists no longer.

"I shall never regret," said Mr. Pickwick in a low voice, "I shall never regret having devoted the greater part of two years to mixing with different varieties and shades of human character: frivolous as my pursuit of novelty may have appeared to many. Nearly the whole of my previous life having been devoted to business and the pursuit of wealth,

numerous scenes of which I had no previous conception have dawned upon me—I hope to the enlargement of my mind, and the improvement of my understanding. If I have done but little good, I trust I have done less harm, and that none of my adventures will be other than a source of amusing and pleasant recollection to me in the decline of life. God bless you all!”

With these words, Mr. Pickwick filled and drained a bumper with a trembling hand, and his eyes moistened as his friends rose with one accord, and pledged him from their hearts.

There were very few preparatory arrangements to be made for the marriage of Mr. Snodgrass. As he had neither father nor mother, and had been in his minority a ward of Mr. Pickwick's, that gentleman was perfectly well acquainted with his possessions and prospects. His account of both was quite satisfactory to Wardle—as almost any other account would have been, for the good old gentleman was overflowing with hilarity and kindness—and a handsome portion having been bestowed upon Emily, the marriage was fixed to take place on the fourth day from that time: the suddenness of which preparations reduced three dress-makers and a tailor to the extreme verge of insanity.

Getting post-horses to the carriage, old Wardle started off, next day, to bring his mother up to town. Communicating his intelligence to the old lady with characteristic impetuosity, she instantly fainted away; but being promptly revived, ordered the brocaded silk gown to be packed up forthwith, and proceeded to relate some circumstances of a similar nature attending the marriage of the eldest daughter of Lady Tollinglower, deceased, which occupied three hours in the recital, and were not half finished at last.

Mrs. Trundle had to be informed of all the mighty preparations that were making in London, and being in a delicate state of health was informed thereof through Mr. Trundle, lest the news should be too much for her; but it was not too much for her, inasmuch as she at once wrote off to Muggleton, to order a new cap and a black satin gown, and moreover avowed her determination of being present at the ceremony. Hereupon, Mr. Trundle called in the doctor, and the doctor said Mrs. Trundle ought to know best how she felt herself, to which Mrs. Trundle replied that she felt herself quite equal to it, and that she had made up her mind to go; upon which the doctor, who was a wise and discreet doctor, and knew what was good for himself as well as for

other people, said that perhaps if Mrs. Trundle stopped at home she might hurt herself more by fretting, than by going, so perhaps she had better go. And she did go; the doctor with great attention sending in half a dozen of medicine, to be drunk upon the road.

In addition to these points of distraction, Wardle was intrusted with two small letters to two small young ladies who were to act as bridesmaids; upon the receipt of which, the two young ladies were driven to despair by having no "things" ready for so important an occasion, and no time to make them in—a circumstance which appeared to afford the two worthy papas of the two small young ladies rather a feeling of satisfaction than otherwise. However, old frocks were trimmed, and new bonnets made, and the young ladies looked as well as could possibly have been expected of them. And as they cried at the subsequent ceremony in the proper places, and trembled at the right times, they acquitted themselves to the admiration of all beholders.

How the two poor relations ever reached London—whether they walked, or got behind coaches, or procured lifts in wagons, or carried each other by turns—is uncertain; but there they were, before Wardle; and the very first people that knocked at the door of Mr. Pickwick's house, on the bridal morning were the two poor relations, all smiles and shirt collar.

They were welcomed heartily though, for riches or poverty had no influence on Mr. Pickwick; the new servants were all alacrity and readiness; Sam was in a most unrivalled state of high spirits and excitement; Mary was glowing with beauty and smart ribands.

The bridegroom, who had been staying at the house for two or three days previous, sallied forth gallantly to Dulwich Church to meet the bride, attended by Mr. Pickwick, Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer, and Mr. Tupman; with Sam Weller outside, having at his button-hole a white favour, the gift of his lady love, and clad in a new and gorgeous suit of livery invented for the occasion. They were met by the Wardles, and the Winkles, and the bride and bridesmaids, and the Trundles; and the ceremony having been performed, the coaches rattled back to Mr. Pickwick's to breakfast, where little Mr. Perker already awaited them.

Here, all the light clouds of the more solemn part of the proceedings passed away; every face shone forth joyously; nothing was to be heard but congratulations and commen-

dations. Everything was so beautiful! The lawn in front, the garden behind, the miniature conservatory, the dining-room, the drawing-room, the bed-rooms, the smoking-room, and above all the study with its pictures and easy chairs, and odd cabinets, and queer tables, and books out of number, with a large cheerful window opening upon a pleasant lawn and commanding a pretty landscape, dotted here and there with little houses almost hidden by the trees; and then the curtains, and the carpets, and the chairs, and the sofas! Everything was so beautiful, so compact, so neat, and in such exquisite taste, said everybody, that there really was no deciding what to admire most.

And in the midst of all this, stood Mr. Pickwick, his countenance lighted up with smiles, which the heart of no man, woman, or child, could resist: himself the happiest of the group: shaking hands, over and over again with the same people, and when his own hands were not so employed, rubbing them with pleasure: turning round in a different direction at every fresh expression of gratification or curiosity, and inspiring everybody with his looks of gladness and delight.

Breakfast is announced. Mr. Pickwick leads the old lady (who has been very eloquent on the subject of Lady Tollimglower), to the top of a long table; Wardle takes the bottom; the friends arrange themselves on either side; Sam takes his station behind his master's chair; the laughter and talking cease; Mr. Pickwick, having said grace, pauses for an instant, and looks round him. As he does so, the tears roll down his cheeks, in the fulness of his joy.

Let us leave our old friend in one of those moments of unmixed happiness, of which, if we seek them, there are ever some, to cheer our transitory existence here. There are dark shadows on the earth, but its lights are stronger in the contrast. Some men, like bats or owls, have better eyes for the darkness than for the light. We, who have no such optical powers, are better pleased to take our last parting look at the visionary companions of many solitary hours, when the brief sunshine of the world is blazing full upon them.

It is the fate of most men who mingle with the world, and attain even the prime of life, to make many real friends, and lose them in the course of nature. It is the fate of all authors or chroniclers to create imaginary friends, and lose them in the course of art. Nor is this the full extent of

their misfortunes; for they are required to furnish an account of them besides.

In compliance with this custom—unquestionably a bad one—we subjoin a few biographical words, in relation to the party at Mr. Pickwick's assembled.

Mr. and Mrs. Winkle, being fully received into favour by the old gentleman, were shortly afterwards installed in a newly-built house, not half a mile from Mr. Pickwick's. Mr. Winkle, being engaged in the City as agent or town correspondent of his father, exchanged his old costume for the ordinary dress of Englishmen, and presented all the external appearance of a civilised Christian ever afterwards.

Mr. and Mrs. Snodgrass settled at Dingley Dell, where they purchased and cultivated a small farm, more for occupation than profit. Mr. Snodgrass, being occasionally abstracted and melancholy, is to this day reputed a great poet among his friends and acquaintance, although we do not find that he has ever written anything to encourage the belief. There are many celebrated characters, literary, philosophical, and otherwise, who hold a high reputation on a similar tenure.

Mr. Tupman, when his friends married, and Mr. Pickwick settled, took lodgings at Richmond, where he has ever since resided. He walks constantly on the Terrace during the summer months, with a youthful and jaunty air which has rendered him the admiration of the numerous elderly ladies of single condition, who reside in the vicinity. He has never proposed again.

Mr. Bob Sawyer, having previously passed through the Gazette, passed over to Bengal, accompanied by Mr. Benjamin Allen; both gentlemen having received surgical appointments from the East India Company. They each had the yellow fever fourteen times, and then resolved to try a little abstinence; since which period, they have been doing well.

Mrs. Bardell let lodgings to many conversable single gentlemen, with great profit, but never brought any more actions for breach of promise of marriage. Her attorneys, Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, continue in business, from which they realise a large income, and in which they are universally considered among the sharpest of the sharp.

Sam Weller kept his word, and remained unmarried, for two years. The old housekeeper dying at the end of that time, Mr. Pickwick promoted Mary to the situation, on condition of her marrying Mr. Weller at once, which she did without

a murmur. From the circumstance of two sturdy little boys having been repeatedly seen at the gate of the back garden, there is reason to suppose that Sam has some family.

The elder Mr. Weller drove a coach for twelve months, but being afflicted with the gout, was compelled to retire. The contents of the pocket-book had been so well invested for him, however, by Mr. Pickwick, that he had a handsome independence to retire on, upon which he still lives at an excellent public-house near Shooter's Hill, where he is quite revered as an oracle: boasting very much of his intimacy with Mr. Pickwick, and retaining a most unconquerable aversion to widows.

Mr. Pickwick himself continued to reside in his new house, employing his leisure hours in arranging the memoranda which he afterwards presented to the secretary of the once famous club, or in hearing Sam Weller read aloud, with such remarks as suggested themselves to his mind, which never failed to afford Mr. Pickwick great amusement. He was much troubled at first, by the numerous applications made to him by Mr. Snodgrass, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Trundle, to act as godfather to their offspring; but he has become used to it now, and officiates as a matter of course. He never had occasion to regret his bounty to Mr. Jingle; for both that person and Job Trotter became, in time, worthy members of society, although they have always steadily objected to return to the scenes of their old haunts and temptations. Mr. Pickwick is somewhat infirm now; but he retains all his former juvenility of spirit, and may still be frequently seen, contemplating the pictures in the Dulwich Gallery, or enjoying a walk about the pleasant neighbourhood on a fine day. He is known by all the poor people about, who never fail to take their hats off, as he passes, with great respect. The children idolise him, and so indeed does the whole neighbourhood. Every year, he repairs to a large family merry-making at Mr. Wardle's; on this, as on all other occasions, he is invariably attended by the faithful Sam, between whom and his master there exists a steady and reciprocal attachment which nothing but death will terminate.

GLOSSARY ¹

Acceptance. The signature which the person whom a bill orders to pay, writes on the bill to bind himself to do so. *See Bill.*

Ad captandum argument. An unfair appeal to personal inclination.

Affidavit. A statement signed and made on oath before a magistrate.

Alleybi. (Alibi=somewhere else.) A man accused of crime, who proves that he was absent from the scene of it at the time of its commission, is said to prove an alibi.

Alley-tor. The more expensive kind of playing marble, made of real marble or alabaster. Ally has been supposed to stand for alabaster. Tor=taw, a marble. The cheaper sort of marble, made of terra-cotta, was called a commoney.

Amicus curiae. A friend of the court; a bystander who assists the judge.

Apollo by night. *See Mars.*

Bacchanalian. Riotously festive or dissipated. Derived from Bacchus, the god of wine.

Bacchus. A sign of a wine-shop was the god Bacchus with a wreath of vine leaves, mounted on a tub.

Bagman. A commercial traveller.

Bagwig. A wig, the back hair of which was enclosed in an ornamental bag. Fashionable in the eighteenth century.

Bail. One who is surety for the subsequent appearance in court of an accused person.

Baker's patent. *Sc. mangle.*

Bankrupt. Insolvent traders were examined, and, on sufficient cause being shown, discharged as bankrupts by the Commissioners of Bankruptcy. *See Insolvent Court.*

Barnacles. Spectacles.

Barnwell and —. Perker refers to Barnwell and Adolphus, authors of Law Reports; Sam Weller to George Barnwell, a character in a once popular melodrama, *The London Merchant*, by Lillo (1693-1739).

Barouche. A four-wheeled carriage with a movable top.

Beadle. A minor official appointed by the vestry to keep order in Church, and act as messenger, &c., for the parish.

¹ This Glossary is the work of Mr. Philip T. Stephenson, Maidenhead County School for Boys.—Ed.

Beadle on Boxing-day. It was the custom for a beadle to publish a broadsheet of verse on Boxing-day.

Beaver. A tall hat. It was originally made of beaver's fur.

Bell Savage. La Belle Sauvage, an inn on Ludgate Hill.

Bill. A written promise to pay a certain sum of money on a certain date to the person named on the bill, or to his order.

Bluchers. A strong leathern half-boot or high shoe, named after General Blucher. Cf. **Vellingtons**.

Blunderbuss. A short gun of large bore that could do execution within limited range without exact aim.

Bone-house. A coffin.

Boot. The part of a coach where luggage was stowed away. The fore-boot was in the roof under the driver's seat, the hinder-boot under the guard's seat.

Borough, The. Southwark. A district in London opposite to the City, on the south side of the river.

Botany Bay. At one time a British convict station in New South Wales.

Bramah key. Invented by Joseph Bramah (1749-1814). Also called simply "bramah".

Brahmin. A mistake for bramah. See **Bramah key**.

Britannia metal. An alloy of tin and pure antimony, resembling silver in appearance.

British Hollands. Gin.

Brummagem. A vulgar form of Birmingham, applied to sham or showy articles, with primary allusion to the counterfeit groats coined there in the seventeenth century, but also to the plated ware still manufactured there. **Brummagem buttons** = counterfeit coin.

Bulkhead. A stall or booth, so called from its projecting roof.

Cabinet voice. A weak voice suitable for a small room.

Cabriolet. A cab.

Camomile tea. A specific for colds.

Camphor julep. The julep is a liquid which dissolves the camphor and renders it palatable.

Can you one? Have you an honour? A player holding two honours asked this of his partner when they had won eight points. If he replied Yes, they scored two more points—and thus won the game—without playing the hand.

Cap (of a gun). The gun was fitted with a cap, which when struck by the trigger took fire and ignited the charge.

Capias. A writ of *capias ad respondendum*, issued to ensure Mr. Pickwick's appearance at the trial. It called on the sheriff to demand bail from him, or in default to keep him in custody.

Ca-sa. *Capias ad satisfaciendum*. A writ issued after judgement, directing the arrest and imprisonment of the defendant until the plaintiff's case was satisfied.

Case-bottle. A bottle made in the form of a case or box for convenience in carrying.

Chaise-cart. A cart intended to carry passengers rather than goods.

Chambers. The room in which a judge sits to transact business not of sufficient importance to be brought into court.

Chancery. The Court which administered Equity as distinguished from Common Law. It dealt especially with such matters as trusts. Chancery is now a division of the High Court.

Chandlery way. Chandler's business; the sale of candles.

Charcoal, Clandestine matrimony or. Suicide by going to sleep in an unventilated room containing a charcoal fire which produces suffocation.

Chariot. A light four-wheeled carriage with only back seats, and differing from a post-chaise in having a coach box.

Chevaux de frise. Iron spikes on the top of a wall.

Cider Cellars. A room for music and drinking, in Maiden Lane near the Strand.

Clear starch. The process of starching lightly, employed on delicate fabrics.

Climacteric. Astrologers looked upon the climacterics—every seventh or ninth year in a man's life—as seasons of special danger. The grand climacteric was sixty-three, the multiple of seven and nine. The term is used generally of ripe age.

Cloths off, Taking his. Removing a horse-cloth preparatory to saddling and harnessing.

'Cod. By God.

Cognovit. Literally, "he has acknowledged"; an acknowledgement by the defendant (here Mrs. Bardell) that the claim of the plaintiffs (Dodson and Fogg) was just.

Commoney. See Alley-tor.

Compounding with his creditor. Paying a portion of the debt on the creditor's agreeing to consider the whole debt paid.

Consolidated Bank Annuities. Interest on Consols (q.v.).

Consols. British Government Stock, the "Consolidated Fund". The payment of interest on the deposits is undertaken by the Bank of England.

Conspiracy. A combination of two or more to do an illegal or oppressive act.

Constable's Miscellany. A book of miscellaneous writings published by Constable during the years 1826-35. It included accounts of voyages and shipwrecks.

Corinthian pillar. A pillar with a bell-shaped capital adorned with acanthus leaves.

Costs. A solicitor's charge for undertaking his client's case. In the trial the costs of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg fell on Mr. Pickwick as the losing party. The adversary's costs are not invariably borne by the losing party. The judge decides this point.

Cottons. Cotton stockings.

Counsels. A mistake for Consols (q.v.).

Court of Common Pleas. The court where civil cases were tried.

Cow (on a chimney-pot). A variant of "cowl"—a cover placed on a chimney-pot to assist ventilation.

Dantzig spruce. A beverage like ginger-beer, made from the spruce-tree.

Declaration. A paper, filed by the plaintiff, in which he makes his claim against the defendant. *See File.*

Demise. The transferring of landed property.

Depitty. Deputy, assistant.

Dick Turpin. A highwayman, famous for his legendary ride from London to York. Executed in 1739.

Discharged under the Act. *See Bankruptcy.*

Doctors' Commons. Consisted of five Ecclesiastical and Admiralty Courts where lawyers having the degree of D.C.L. of Oxford or Cambridge practised. It ceased to exist in 1858.

Done a bill. Signed or given a bill. *See Bill.*

Double. In whist the winners of a game (ten points) are said to score a double if the losers have made less than five points; a single if they have made five or more.

Drabs. Breeches of a drab or light brown colour.

Drug in the market. Plentiful and cheap. Suggested origin:—a drug is sold in such small quantities that there can be no scarcity of it in the wholesale market.

Dutch clock. A clock made in Germany. The mechanism includes a pendulum, two weights which hang by chains to supply the motive power, and wooden frameworks to support the wheels.

Dutch oven. A metal box closed at the top with one side open so as to expose meat placed in it to the fire.

Dutch pipe. A pipe with a long stem and a capacious china bowl which was often surmounted with a metal lid.

East India Company. Held a charter from the British Government, and represented British influence in India from 1600 to 1858, when its powers were transferred to the Crown.

East India Sherry. Sherry matured by a voyage to the East Indies.

Eatanswill. Possibly a reference to Sudbury in Suffolk.

Ecarté. A game of cards.

Epicurus. A Greek philosopher, born in 342 B.C., who taught that happiness was the proper object in life.

Exciseable articles. Excise is a tax on intoxicating liquors and other commodities made and to be sold in this country.

Fanlight. The window at the top of a street door.

Fanteegs. Anxiety.

Faustus, Dr. A legendary German magician of the sixteenth century who sold his soul to the devil for youth and twenty-four

years of life. The legend is the basis of Marlowe's play *Dr. Faustus*, Goethe's play *Faust*, and Gounod's opera *Faust*.

Feast of reason and the flow of soul. Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Satire I, 128.

Ferules (of a knife or fork). Handles.

Fête champêtre. Garden-party.

File. To deposit a document in a court or public office.

Fire-buckets, India-rubber. Goloshes.

First of September. The day when partridge-shooting begins.

Fives. Fists.

Fleet Prison. Stood on the East side of Farringdon Street, then called Fleet Market.

Flying the garter. A game played by jumping over a tape

Fore-boot. *See* Boot.

French bedstead. A bedstead with a canopy at the head.

Frog-hornpipe. A dance in which the performer crouches down in a frog-like attitude.

Fugleman. A soldier, especially expert, formerly placed in front of a regiment as a model to the others in their exercises.

Funded property. Investments in Government securities such as Consols (q.v.).

Funds. *See* Consols.

Fungus-pit. A pit in which mushrooms are grown

Fustian. A coarse tweed.

Gambooge-tops. *See* Tops.

Garter, Flying the. *See* Flying the garter.

Gas microscope. A magic lantern with an oxyhydrogen light.

Gazette. An official Government newspaper containing a list of those appointed to any public office, legal notices, lists of bankrupts, &c.

Gingham. A cotton or linen cloth woven of dyed yarn, often in patterns.

Girandole. An ornamental branched candlestick.

Gleaning for pewter. Soliciting orders for beer, or possibly, gathering up the dirty pewter pots (in which beer was served).

Gossamer. A fine, filmy substance spun by small spiders. Hence the name given to a hat recommended as extremely light.

Grampus. An animal of the whale order, notable for its spouting and blowing.

Gray's Inn. One of the Inns of Court. *See* Temple.

Grimaldi. A famous English clown (1779-1837).

Guillotined cabriolet. Probably means one without the hood found in the older form of this vehicle.

Guy's. Guy's Hospital.

Habeas corpus. Literally, produce his body. By the Act of Parliament thus named any one imprisoned can apply by a writ of *habeas corpus* to be either tried or released on bail.

Hackney cabriolet, or **Hackney-coach**. A cab.

Halves. Boots which reached about half-way up the leg.

Hareskins. In Pickwick's time pads of hareskin were worn by delicate persons as a protection for the chest.

Heeltap. Liquor left at the bottom of a glass after drinking. "No heeltaps" = "Empty your glasses."

Hessians. Long boots with tassels, first worn by the Hessian troops; fashionable at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Highlows. Lace-up boots, named from their being half-way between a top-boot and a shoe.

Horse-chaunter. A swindling horse-dealer.

Horse laugh. A loud, rough laugh.

Hustings. The platform on which took place the initial proceedings for electing a Member of Parliament.

Informers. Persons who took money as a reward for acting as spies and giving information to the police of breaches of the law -- commoner in Pickwick's time than now.

Insolvent Court. The Court which, in certain circumstances, granted liberty to debtors. (The term "bankrupt" was at that time applied to insolvent *traders* only; see **Bankrupt**.)

Jack-towel. A roller towel.

Jean. A twilled cotton cloth.

Jemmy. A great-coat.

Jerkin. A close-fitting jacket or jersey.

Jorum. A large quantity of liquor.

Kersey. A coarse woollen cloth woven from long wool.

Ketch, Jack. Public executioner in the reign of James II; hence used for a hangman generally.

King's Counsel. A title granted by the Crown to barristers of eminence.

Knuckle-down. A game of marbles.

Lambert, Daniel. A famous fat man who exhibited himself for money. At his death (1809) at the age of 39 he weighed 53 stone.

Leading question. A question put to a witness, in which the details of the evidence to be brought out are supplied by the questioner, an answer of Yes or No being expected. A counsel is not allowed to put leading questions at will to the witness he has himself called.

Leg. Blackleg, swindler.

Liege. Bound to render feudal service and allegiance.

Lights in the Sun. It was common to give the rooms of an inn fanciful names. Cf. *She stoops to Conquer*, "Pipes and tobacco for the Angel."

Lime-basket. A basket for holding lime, and therefore very dry.

Lines. The fortifications and military exercising ground at Rochester.

Loan of his acceptance. *See Bill.*

Lucky, Made his. Made his escape.

Luke. Lukewarm.

M.C. Master of the Ceremonies

Mars by day, Apollo by night. A soldier by day, a poet by night. Mars was the Roman god of war, Apollo of poetry.

Matchlock. A gun fitted with a lock in which the powder was ignited by a slow match consisting of cord steeped in saltpetre and lime water. The match itself had first to be lit.

Minerva. The Roman goddess of wisdom.

Moral pocket-handkerchiefs. Handkerchiefs embroidered with a text or other improving phrase.

Moses Pickwick. A well-known coach proprietor.

Nash. Richard Nash, gamester and dandy, known as Beau Nash, and the King of Bath. He became Master of the Ceremonies at Bath in 1740, and by his supervision of its social life added much to the prosperity of the town.

Needful. Money.

New River. A watercourse which helps to supply London with water. It runs from some springs near Ware in Hertfordshire to Clerkenwell reservoir—The New River Head. It was constructed (1607-13) by Sir Hugh Myddelton.

New South Wales. *See Botany Bay.*

Newgate Calendar. First issued in 1773; it contained accounts of persons who had been imprisoned in Newgate.

Nixon, Redfaced. Robert Nixon was a Cheshire agricultural labourer in the reign of James I. Appearing at most times to be an idiot of unintelligible speech, he had intervals of coherent utterance which took the form of obscure prophecy. His remarks were collected and published with his portrait, and sold until long after his death.

Obelisk. Erected in 1771, in honour of Brass Crosby, Lord Mayor of London, who successfully maintained the right to publish Parliamentary debates.

Octavos. Volumes of the octavo size, which is made by folding a sheet into eight leaves.

Odd and even. A game played by holding in the hand one or two small articles, the opposing player having to guess the number.

Office, What's the? What's the matter?

Old Bailey. (Or Bailey.) The Central Criminal Court. It was rebuilt (1904-7) and is now called the New Bailey.

One pair. The set of rooms at the top of one flight of stairs; i.e. a room on the first floor.

Original, The. (Chap. XX.) The plaintiff's solicitor retained in their possession the original parchment writ which empowered them to proceed against Mr. Pickwick, while giving him a certified correct copy.

Oxford Mixture. A dark-grey woollen cloth.

Pan. The god of country life among the ancient Greeks.

Pantiles. Tiles for roofing.

Patrol. The mounted police once employed in districts round London.

Pattens. These were of iron, and were tied under the boots to protect them from the mud and damp.

Pelerine. A cape with a hood.

Penthouse. A structure attached to the wall of a main building and serving as a shed, outhouse, &c.

Perceval, Mr. The Prime Minister of England, who was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons (1812) by Bellingham, a man of deranged mind.

Pettifogging. Engaged in a small or disreputable business, or one conducted by tricky methods.

Pettitoes. Pigs' feet.

Pig's whisper. A very short time.

Pipkin. A small pot for cooking.

Plato. The most famous of Greek philosophers, and the pupil of Socrates. Born about 427 B.C.

Polygon. An open space near Euston Square.

Pope Joan. A game of cards. The counters were called fish

Porpus. A mistake for Morpheus, the god of sleep.

Postchaise. A hired carriage drawn by two or four horses, a postilion being mounted on one.

Post-coach. Postchaise (q.v.).

Pot-valiant. Rendered courageous by drink.

Poussette. To swing round in couples as in a country dance. Originally, the game of push-pin, in which one player tries to push his pin across his opponent's.

Praeipe. A record of the details of a writ, which had to be filed with the court that issued the writ. The praecipe book contained the solicitors' copy of the record.

Probate. Legal permission to execute a will.

Process-server. An officer who presents a process or writ.

Proctors, Old Baily. Corresponded approximately in ecclesiastical matters to solicitors.

Profeel machine. The operator of this contrivance traversed the profile of the sitter with a wire. The motion of the wire moved a pencil which drew the portrait.

Promissory note. (See Bill.) A written promise to pay given by one person to another.

Prooshian Blue. The colour of dresscoats of the period; hence slang corresponding to the modern word "toff".

Protégée. Strictly, a lady under one's protection. Used by Mr. Winkle for sweetheart.

Pythagoras. A Greek philosopher and geometrician who flourished in the sixth century B.C.

Quickset. Live slips of shrubs forming a hedge.

Rappee. A snuff of strong flavour.

Recognizances. A person enters into his recognizances by acknowledging as due to the Crown a debt which he is not to be called on to pay unless certain events happen, i.e. failure on his part to keep the peace, or the disappearance of the person for whom he went bail.

Recovered. *Sc. arms.*

Referee. A mistake for reverie.

Regency Park. A mistake for Regent's Park.

Remanded. Sent back into cusody, because their cases are not yet disposed of.

Renew the bill. Allow a new bill with a later date of payment to take the place of a former bill. *See Bill.*

Reticule. A lady's bag in the form of a small sack with a cord running round the top which can be drawn tight.

Revoke. Not following suit at whist when it is possible to do so.

Revolution of July. Charles X abdicated the throne of France in July 1830, and Louis Philippe became "King of the French".

Ribston pippin. An apple grown at Ribston in Yorkshire.

Rig. Frolic.

Riot Act. Permits the taking of extreme measures against those who continue rioting an hour after it has been read.

Road-book. A traveller's guide-book of towns, distances, &c.

Roman capitals. Capital letters in ordinary "roman" type as distinct from italic or fancy type.

Roughed the spade. Played a trump to take the spade. Usual spelling, ruffed.

R. Rub. *See Rubber.*

Rubber. The best of three games at whist.

Rules, i.e. of the King's Bench Prison. A district near the prison where debtors in custody could obtain permission to live, on giving security not to escape.

Rushlight. A tallow candle with a rush wick, the cheapest form of candle—not used nowadays.

Sackcloth. A coarse cloth made of hemp or flax.

St. George's Fields. Part of the Borough of Southwark, lying immediately south of the Obelisk.

St. Martin's le Grand. So called from a church of that name on the site of which the General Post Office was afterwards built.

Sangur Point. Near the coast of New Guinea.

Sapper. A military engineer.

Sarcophagus. A stone coffin.

Saxon doors. A common characteristic of these was the arched roof.

Schedule A and B. In the Reform Act of 1832, Schedule A was a list of boroughs to be disfranchised. Schedule B of boroughs in which the number of members was to be reduced to one.

Scragging. Hanging.

Serjeant. A barrister of the highest rank. He had the privilege of pleading in the Court of Common Pleas. The title was abolished in 1880.

Shakespeare, hem! A reminiscence of Dr. Pangloss (in *The Heir-at-Law*, by Colman the Younger, 1762-1836), who frequently introduces a quotation into his conversation, followed by the author's name and a short cough.

Single. *See Double.*

Smalls. Short knee-breeches. "The gentleman in black smalls" is the narrator of the story in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*.

Somerset. Somersault.

Special Constable. A person appointed to serve temporarily as a policeman.

Spike Park. The precincts of the Fleet prison, which had spikes on the walls to prevent escape.

Spout. "Up the spout" = "at the pawnbroker's."

Stage. Stage-coach.

Stamp-office. The Government Office where legal documents were stamped.

Stanhope. A light, open, two-wheeled carriage.

Statute. Statute.

Stock. A broad covering for the neck, doing duty for collar and tie.

Stone crop. A carved bunch of foliage at the top of a stone pinnacle.

Street-keeper. Manager of the traffic in London.

Strike-a-Light. Probably means a bumptious and lazy person.

Surreyside. The part of London lying south of the Thames.

Surtout. A coat cut like a frock coat, with full skirts.

Swing. A reference to the rick-burnings which took place in the riots of 1830-3, and which were attributed to a mythical Captain Swing. Mr. Pickwick describes himself as set on fire by the praise of mankind and extinguished by philanthropy, his insurance office.

Tablets. A form of notebook consisting of sheets of ivory or slate. The writing could be washed off and the tablet used again.

Tales, Prayed a. "Tales" is Latin for "such". To "pray a Tales" was to ask that the number of the jury should be made up from *such* as were present.

Tax cart. Taxed-cart; a cart on two wheels, subject to a tax.

Taxed costs. A solicitor's bill of costs is, on the application of the party liable for payment, revised by a taxing-master.

Temple. A. The Societies of the Inner and Middle Temple, which form two of the four Inns of Court. B. The official habitation of those Societies.

Tip Cheese. Probably Tipcat, a game in which a small piece of wood, pointed at both ends, is struck with a stick, so as to fly into the air.

Tipstaff. A constable, so called because he carried a staff tipped with metal.

Tizer. The *Morning Advertiser*, a paper in the public-house interest.

Tompion Clock. Thomas Tompion (1639-1713) was the father of English clock-making. The clock, probably a specimen of his workmanship, was still kept as a curiosity when *Pickwick* was written.

Tops. Boots reaching to a little below the knee and having the appearance of being turned over at the top, owing to difference of colouring.

Townskip. Of doubtful meaning and etymology. Perhaps from skipper (= youngster).

Trinity Term. May 22 to June 12, one of the four Terms in the year during which the Law Courts were open. Nowadays the Courts are open for longer periods, called Sittings.

Trivet. A tripod, which of course stands firmly on uneven ground.

Trunks. Short wide breeches gathered in near the knee.

Tyburn. Where criminals used to be executed. Now known as Marylebone.

Vay-bill (Way-bill). The list of passengers and luggage carried by a coach.

Vellingtons. Wellington boots, reaching above the knee. So named after the Duke of Wellington. Cf. **Bluchers**.

Vicar-General. A lawyer employed by some of the bishops to assist in ecclesiastical causes.

Wafered. Fastened with a wafer, a thin disk of dried paste made of flour, water, gum, and colouring matter. The wafer was first damped as a postage stamp is.

Wandering Jew. A legendary character doomed to wander from land to land for having struck Christ when He was being led to Golgotha.

Warming-pan. A pan filled with live coals. It served the purpose of the present hot-water bottle.

Warrant of Attorney. The correct phrase is "power of attorney", by which one person gives another authority to act on his behalf.

Wassail. A drink consisting of ale flavoured with wine, sugar, spices, and fruit.

Watch-box. A sentry-box for the accommodation of night-watchmen.

Watchman. A form of policeman, existing previous to the creation of our modern police force initiated in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel.

Waterloo Bridge, Dry arches of. There were two series of these arches. One series has been filled in with masonry. The entrance to the other, which is now used for storage, is under an archway near the foot of Savoy Street.

Waterman. Originally a man who gave water to horses. Later applied also to a man who opened cab doors.

Weazen. Thin, withered up.

Wharfinger. One who owns or has charge of a wharf.

Wheeler. The one of two horses nearer to the vehicle.

Whist. This was long whist, in which a game consisted of ten points instead of five as in the modern game.

Whistling-shop. A room in a debtors' prison where spirits were sold; perhaps so called because the customers whistled to obtain entrance.

Whitecross Street. A street in Finsbury in which stood a debtor's prison.

Whitewash. *See* Insolvent Court.

Wight. A man.

Window duty. Instituted in 1695. Repealed in 1851.

Wire-wove. A fine quality of note-paper in the manufacture of which the pulp is collected on a frame of woven wires; in contradistinction to laid paper made on a frame of parallel wires.

Zeno. A Greek philosopher who flourished about 300 B.C., the founder of the Stoics.

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